

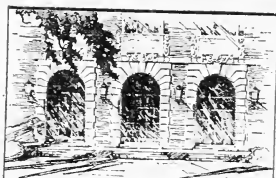
Autobiography of

THOMAS ALLEN

by the Author of

"POST MORTEM"





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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF

T H O M A S A L L E N

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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF
T H O M A S A L L E N

BY THE
AUTHOR OF 'POST MORTEM'

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III.

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF

T H O M A S A L L E N.

CHAPTER I.

As soon as I had heard the calamity which had befallen me, I wished the alderman good-day, and hastened from the house, with the intention of forthwith seeing my father. But after I had gone a few yards, I heard a loud shout, and saw the alderman in his straw hat running after me. He came to say that he had just seen in the newspaper that my father and one other

director had been admitted to bail. He also told me that he had ordered his dog-cart to carry me to the nearest station, and had sent into the village to dismiss the conveyance I had left there. "So that you won't be bothered," said he, "with any silly gossiping."

I was very grateful to him for the kindness and delicacy which he had shown me ; and when I was seated in his dog-cart, once more taking leave of him, I expressed my hearty thanks. He wrung my hand, and said with a sigh, "Ah ! my dear sir, I only wish I could be of any service to you. It's generally the sons that give their old fathers all the trouble ; your case is just the other way."

During my journey to London, I began to see difficulties before me in the matter of ascertaining where my father was. I at

first resolved to go to his solicitor, whose name I had now seen in a newspaper (I noticed that it was not the name of the lawyer whom we usually employed); but somehow I presently discovered good reasons for going to Helena in the first place, and obtaining her assistance.

Perhaps my desire to cling to her for assistance at this time may have been selfish and unmanly; but I did not think of that, for the feeling came to me in the most natural manner possible; also, I satisfied my conscience by making a private compact with myself that if I did not immediately find Helena where I expected to find her, I would then proceed to the solicitor.

I did find her at the house from which she had dated her telegram to me in India; and I believe I was surprised not to see

her wasted to a skeleton, and prostrated with grief on my account. But though surprised, I can honestly say I was not displeased. She was as beautiful, to my eyes at all events, as when I had last beheld her; and besides being smiling and cheerful, I was glad to see that she was calm and rational. Finding that I was disposed to enlarge with some warmth, and at some length, upon the happiness which I experienced in again meeting her, she quickly recalled me to my duty; and having told me where she believed my father was to be found, desired me to go to him at once. She also, it is true, gave me a rapid sketch of the course of my father's misfortunes, and particularly explained that my uncle had travelled out of the reach of ordinary communication when they had sought to recall him. But these matters

will be investigated for the reader's benefit later on.

Before leaving Helena, I asked her why she had not explained the nature of affairs more exactly, either by letter or in the telegram which she had sent. She replied that she had only with difficulty extorted from my father the fact that so far as he knew I was in ignorance of what was passing; and that directly she had heard this, she had communicated with me, "on the spur of the moment."

Feeling a great deal happier after this interview, in spite of all that I had heard, I now went to a certain hotel in the City, to which Helena had directed me, and there inquired for my father. I inquired for him with a downcast air, representing a struggle between pride and shame; yet I was disgusted, and not pleased, to find that my

father's name acted on the people of the hotel very much like the name of a distinguished general just returned from conquest.

"No, sir," they told me, "Mr Allen has just left us ; but Mr Johns is staying on ; he's engaged two sitting-rooms."

They assumed an air of well-merited disappointment, on finding that Mr Johns would not satisfy me. They told me, however, that my father had gone to Sydenham, and instructed me where to find him there.

On reaching the hotel at Sydenham, to which they had directed me, I desired to see my father, but was informed that he could see no one. While I was framing a short message of preparation, however, I saw my father himself, looking at me from a door which he held partially open. I immediately ran up, and at length stood face to face with him alone.

The first words he uttered after I had embraced him were, "Merciful heavens! Tom; how can you come near me?"

I said that I was heartily sorry for not having come sooner. Then, telling him that I heard matters were not nearly so bad as he imagined, I begged him to tell me all that had happened.

After a few broken expressions of regret and despair, he complied with my request.

"I suppose, my boy," he began, "you don't require me to go down on my knees to assert my innocence?"

"I know you're innocent, well enough," said I.

He proceeded as follows: "You know, Tom, I've always been considered a moderately rich man. I suppose the people in our part used to settle my income at something like £5000 a-year, didn't they? It

was really never so large, though the property, under different circumstances, might have perhaps represented a sum of that kind. I believe the only man who could have made my landed property produce anything considerable, would have been a flint-hearted agent; but I never would have an agent, as you know. Perhaps, if I had died when you were a child,—and indeed I heartily wish I had,—if I had died when you were a child, then a guardian, a conscientious guardian without a conscience—if you can imagine such a man—might have screwed out of the estate a very handsome inheritance for you by the time you came of age. But Providence chose that I should live, and manage my own affairs—mismanage them, of course I ought to say. Now I always had a turn for generosity, and this has led me into

being a very easy, in fact a very foolish landlord. An owner of land, who is independently rich, can afford to act as I have done; just as Lord F—— can afford to disregard his coal as a source of annual income. But you know, Tom, land formed the bulk of my property; all I had besides, being a legacy my uncle Turpin left me years ago—into which I have dipped from time to time in order to keep things going. I was saying just now that I had a turn for generosity; so I have—a fatal turn: but I have a still more fatal turn for *business*; for making a fool of myself; for throwing money out of the window; and the result of this has been, that while I allowed my land to yield me next to nothing, I began gambling with the Turpin legacy, which I called my spare capital. At first I dabbled a little in stocks, and assisted

Graham in floating his silver company. The silver company didn't pay—though it may, ultimately—and Graham asked me to join in his torpedo. Your uncle was staying with me at that time. You know the opinion he always entertained about Graham; he was very earnest in begging me to have no more to do with him. At about the same time, Andrews and some one else invited me to become a director of the Wolvenden Joint-Stock Bank, in which I already had an interest—ten shares. Your uncle and I thought I could not do better. He said that it was an old-established bank, where everything went like clock-work, and that I could attend the weekly meetings of the board when I wished for a little amusement, or not attend them at all, just as I pleased, and that it would 'keep me out of mischief.'

He alluded to the torpedo, I suppose, which I gave up at his request, and against my own inclination. I became a director of the bank then. Old Andrews was the leading spirit, and everything seemed as sound and above-board as possible. I never told you of the step which I had taken. You were in the north with your regiment at the time, and I was afraid I should only alarm you; besides, you know, my dear Tom, how often you used to pitch into me for my unfortunate failing.

“I was speaking of old Andrews. He had the managership at the time I became a director, and I believe that as long as he remained so, there was nothing very wrong with the concern. But he very soon retired. He left the sinking ship,—I don’t say he knew it was sinking; though he must have had his own opinion about it,

since he retired. He was succeeded by a very different kind of person. This Hamper, or Colonel Hamper, as he called himself, became managing director next. He had held some position in one of the branches, and the old directors had a great opinion of his business capacity. I knew nothing about him till some time afterwards, when he bought The Warren. Soon after Hamper joined us, he brought in a brother-in-law of his (a man I didn't like), and Johns, the timber merchant. Then another of the old directors withdrew, and Scully, the brewer, came in. He was nearly bankrupt at the time, but I knew nothing of it. I wasn't in very good company, was I?

“Mr Saunders was the only director left whom I knew at all intimately; and though he used to look rather blue, occasionally, I believe he knew no better than

I did, what was going on. Well, now comes the point, which I daresay you'll understand quite as well as your father did at the time. The bank used to make advances to Hamper, to Scully, to all of themselves in short, except to Saunders, Johns, and me. It was our duty to know all about these advances, to inquire about the securities, and so on. There was no excuse for my folly ; at least the only excuses were my own vanity, and the unfortunate trust which I reposed in Hamper. I disliked him personally, I admit, and yet I had extraordinary confidence in him. He seemed to have marvellous luck in everything he undertook ; he was a good-natured rascal, and very magnificent in his habits ; and he also gave one the impression of being shrewd, and at the same time honest. Saunders believed in him,

and thought of him, just as I did. Saunders used to go into all the books at the weekly meetings, and I thought the old fellow understood what he was about, though he was in reality as great a block-head as I was, and a greater dupe.

“Well, after a little time, your poor mother was taken ill, and I gave up attending the weekly meetings altogether. I made Saunders my proxy, and told him to look after my interests. He used to rub his hands, and say, ‘Oh, I will; trust me’—you know how he goes on; ‘oh, I will,’ rubbing his hands; ‘I won’t be “Hampered,” and I’ll keep a sharp lookout.’ But he’s lost every sixpence, and I must not feel angry with him. Imagine my horror, when your poor mother was in a very critical condition, to hear from Saunders that the bank’s acceptances were being

refused in London, and that we were asking for assistance in all directions ! He told me that it was only a temporary cloud, but you can imagine my alarm. Hamper wrote to me at the same time, informing me that the difficulties arose from the badness of times, coupled with the failure of a certain firm which was a heavy debtor to us. He said that these difficulties could be tided over with perfect ease, if we could raise £240,000. I was so accustomed to hear him talk of millions, that this sum didn't appear so enormous as it may seem to you. I sent for Mahuish (the solicitor), and asked him what he thought of the position of the bank ? What do you suppose he told me ? That the bank was as safe as a church ; 'a little short of money just at the time, like everybody else ; but absolutely safe, perfectly stable.' The ras-

cal! he was running with the hare, and hunting with the hounds; and though he has since pretended that a director's consulting a lawyer about his own bank was a very good joke, he did not say so at the time, I can tell you. On the contrary, he seemed almost to anticipate what I had to ask him, though no doubt he was really laughing in his sleeve; for I ought to have told you he had an account with the bank himself, and had been talked over, if not positively bribed, before he came to see me. So Mahuish was much worse than useless.

“Your uncle, he had left the country. I sent messages in all directions to bring him back, but he might as well have been at the bottom of the sea. Nothing was ever more unfortunate; for it is useless now to pretend that I could ever rely on my

judgment; and he would have helped me, I know, with something better than mere advice. In the midst of my perplexity your dear mother died. If it had not been for Helena Chobham, I should have suffered far greater misery than I did; but she was with us to the last, and I quite agree with you, there's not another woman in the world to equal her. It will be charitable for you to suppose that grief made me lose my senses altogether. Hamper, then his brother-in-law, then the wretched Saunders, and at last the whole board collectively, came and assailed me with the same request; that I should come forward and save the bank from ruin. Saunders went further than that, for he asked me to save him and myself from disgrace! Your poor mother was buried, and, on the following day, I gave directions for raising £60,000

on the estate. In perpetrating this insane act, I was either mad, or utterly desperate. It's easy to say now what I might have done, and what I ought to have done ; but I'm past all that. Yet if my brother had only remained a few weeks longer in England, I might have been saved. His assistance—his advice and assistance—would have averted this dreadful calamity."

At this point I gently reproved my father for not having told me a word as to his difficulties.

"Yes, Tom," he continued ; "but the plain truth is, I was afraid to confess all to you. I wasn't sure you'd be so forgiving, or take it so well as you do ; besides, I thought that one sorrow at a time was enough for you ; and Tom, I expected you would have heard as it was ; for you get all that kind of news : but from what you say,

you must have been in camp at the time, or away on leave; and when you returned, perhaps your brother officers, who had read my name in the list of bank directors, thought it was a common name, and didn't trouble themselves to tell you anything about it. But, to tell you the plain truth, Tom, I have sometimes felt in perfect terror of you. My poor, poor boy, how terribly I have disgraced you! I am nothing but an unfortunate encumbrance.

“ I have little more to tell you. Saunders and myself sank everything in our effort to save the catastrophe. Hamper persuaded some firm to make him a heavy advance; indeed I can say this much for the man, that he was as plucky as could be, up to the last; but all in vain. Graham, I may tell you—Ralph Graham—has been securely looking on at

these disasters, and taking a sort of moral tone. His torpedo only cost money to a confiding government, China, which perhaps deserved to lose; while our ruin—but I must finish my story.

“The bank shut up shop, with a deficiency of nearly three million pounds. The events which followed have nearly driven me to distraction. To begin with, I was arrested by——”

I here interrupted him with the question, “Upon what charge?”

“Upon a charge of fraud!” replied he. “The books, the cursed balance-sheets, of which I was as ignorant as a child, had been falsified to show that we were in a solvent condition; and to that falsification, say what I will, I must appear to be a party. I appear so at this moment, and must take my trial as a criminal, in company with

Hamper and his infernal confederates, as if I were one of the most hardened villains in the world; when I ought in reality to be prosecuting them, when I ought in reality to be regarded, at the worst, as nothing more dangerous than a miserable and infatuated idiot !”

Perhaps there are some persons who may concur in the propriety of the last reflection; and I will not express my own opinion on the subject, as I should find great difficulty in appearing neither unnaturally harsh, nor foolishly partial.

When my father had finished his distressing recital, I asked him, in the first place, whether his defence was being prepared by competent hands. He replied, that he had of course dismissed Mahuish, his former lawyer, but that his new solicitors had procured the services of the most

learned and eloquent counsel of the day, and were hard at work in preparing his defence.

Considering this state of things satisfactory, I next recommended my father to eat a good dinner, which he had not done for a long time past : and I soon had the happiness of seeing him greatly comforted in body as well as in mind.

CHAPTER II.

It is only reasonable that I should take no pleasure in dwelling at length on the subject of my father's trial at the Old Bailey.¹ Moreover, I cannot find in that event any of those incidents or circumstances which are commonly used for romantic descriptions of criminal trials. My father did not bow his snowy head; for he held it erect, in order to hear better what was passing. He did not hold my hand, nor did I hold his; for we were placed in two very different parts of the court. He was not defended by a young barrister burning

¹ Offences committed in the part of the county where Wolvenden was, were tried in London, at the Central Criminal Court.

for distinction, who constantly glanced at the jury with a look of painful anxiety ; for he had for his principal counsel, a debauched but talented old knight, who had almost more practice than he desired, and who was consumed by no inward fire, excepting a moderate love of gain.

This gentleman, when the proper time came, contended at length that my father had neither desired nor attempted to deceive others, but had been himself deceived. That even supposing this not to be the case, no motive of personal gain was to be traced in his proceedings ; that he had, on the contrary, sunk everything that he possessed, and had reduced himself from wealth to indigence, for the benefit of that concern with which he was nominally—and excepting as a kind of munificent benefactor, only nominally—associated.

He pointed out that, during a great part of the time embraced in the indictment, my father had never attended the meetings of the board; his absence being due, not to remissness on his part, but to domestic affliction of the most terrible kind, which had incapacitated him from attending to any ordinary business, and had in its fatal termination, certainly for a time, distracted him. The counsel said further, that without desiring to cast any reflection whatever upon the other directors, whose defence, for all he knew, might be even more complete than that of his own client, he nevertheless felt bound to point out that in this great case, my father had throughout occupied, and at that moment continued to occupy, an entirely unique position. He had originally been chosen for the post of director, not because he knew anything about bank-

ing, for he knew nothing ; not, in short, that he should be of any professional assistance, but that by his position in the county, as a deputy-lieutenant, a magistrate, and an extensive landowner, he might give his countenance, and that with his considerable means he might also give aid of a much more material kind, to certain plans and transactions in which he himself should not take an active part. In his whole experience (that of the counsel), he had never heard of persons in the situation of the other directors, meeting with success in such an apparently impracticable scheme ; and he ventured to say that neither he, nor anybody else, had ever before heard of a person being found at hand to fall into such a scheme with such astonishing readiness, and with such a fatal disregard to the most ordinary caution. Such credu-

lity might perhaps be painted in the pages of a novel ; but facts, he knew, were often much stranger than fiction, and it was with such facts that he had to deal. He proceeded to do so ; and when several witnesses had been called, and much documentary evidence — especially some correspondence between Hamper, Scully, and Hamper's brother-in-law—had been read, the extent of my father's folly and gullibility began to be admitted, and his innocence was in a fair way of being established.

The judge, in summing up, called attention to one or two fallacies in the arguments of my father's counsel : he pointed out that the directors, by whose invitation my father had joined the board, were none of them, excepting Saunders, directly connected with the events which had led to the present investigation : that professional

knowledge was not supposed to be a necessary qualification of a director-elect : that my father had joined the directorate of his own free will, not with the intention of becoming its benefactor, which was never meant to be seriously urged, but from a love of meddling in matters which it was plain he did not understand. On the other hand, however, the judge pointed out that my father was entitled to the full benefit of those representations which had been made as to his repeated absence from the meetings of the board at the time of his wife's illness (he gave all the dates with laborious accuracy); and the presumption to be drawn as to the consequences to himself of that repeated absence, must be properly interpreted.

My father was found "Not guilty;" and though his heart was crushed by the judge's

severe animadversions as to "stupendous carelessness often bringing men to the very verge of crime," he found himself a free man ; and while the other occupants of the dock were removed to prison, he had the satisfaction of going in another direction.

As soon as he was thus discharged, I escorted him to a cab. The windows of this vehicle were immediately broken by some ragged individuals, who I should have supposed had no direct connection with any bank in the world. We escaped from the Old Bailey, however, without encountering any further violence, disinterested or otherwise ; and were soon calmly discussing recent events, and projecting plans for the future, in the retirement of Helena's house, to which place she had thoughtfully invited us.

We found her exceedingly happy, and

apparently more grateful for my father's deliverance than he was himself. However, she spoke very little of that matter; displaying more interest in our arrangements as to the future. My father soon showed a disinclination to talk, and expressed a desire to have some rest. Upon which, I took him to another room, and left him on a sofa, where he soon fell asleep. I then returned to Helena.

After a little silence, I remarked, "that I supposed I ought to be very happy that my father had not been sent to walk on the treadmill."

"It is very natural you should feel depressed at present," said Helena; "but very soon I expect you to put on a different face, and to hope for the best, as I do."

"As to hoping," said I, "I don't see anything to hope for; but I'm a man, and I

can live down a piece of bad luck like this, or even worse."

"Of course you can," said Helena; "and you may be sure nothing is given to you to bear without a wise purpose."

"That may be, with me," answered I, "for I admit that my life hasn't been of much use to any one yet. But where, in the name of goodness, is the wise purpose in your being always made miserable, when you've done your duty all your life?"

"I am not always miserable, and I haven't always done my duty," said she. "But now," she continued, "I must remind you of a piece of advice you once gave to me; you said we ought not to 'revel' in unhappiness, as you called it, but rather try to discover that equivalent amount of happiness which may generally be found concealed in our worst misfortunes."

I had no recollection of having ever given her such valuable advice ; but I asked her whether she could point out the particular bright spot in my father's affairs at that moment ?

"Indeed I can," she answered. "If something of this kind had not happened to him now, it would have happened later on, when he would have been too old to have borne such affliction ; and when, very likely, he would have already tarnished his reputation by having been mixed up in enterprises which had ruined other people. As it is, I hope his unfortunate fancy has been entirely cured. I do not believe that he will be considered to have disgraced himself. For of course every one must know that he has been cheated himself, and that he is absolutely ruined."

“That’s very consoling, certainly,” observed I.

“Well, don’t let us talk about it,” said Helena; “let us decide what you are going to do. Your father hasn’t Hare Place to go to now. How I wish I had a nice house of my own, as Colling Hall used to be! Then he could come and stay with me till he was quite strong again.”

“You might found another institution,” said I, “for unfortunate speculators; and make me the governor, if you chose.”

We were presently rejoined by my father, who was much refreshed by the sleep which he had enjoyed. He and I dined with Helena Chobham, and then went to Sydenham, where, as our poor friend White would have said, “we were hiding our diminished heads.”

CHAPTER III.

AFTER many consultations, my father and I agreed to retire to the island of Jersey. The obscurity of the locality, and the reported cheapness of living, were to us two powerful recommendations; and moreover, we had heard of a suitable house that was to be obtained.

In spite of the result of the trial, the capricious world had taken the fit of believing that my father was a rascal; that it was quite impossible he could have been so stupid as he pretended; that, on the contrary, he had shown extraordinary talent in having evaded the legal consequences,

while he enjoyed the illegal fruits, of an enormous fraud in which he had been an approving sleeping-partner, if not a real prime mover. So my father, though saved the physical inconveniences of living in prison, had lost his good name, until such time as "public opinion" should take one of those fits of believing all its reputed rascals to be injured men.

My father, then, made his bow to society, and, in company with his only son, withdrew to a spot close to Pontac in the isle of Jersey.

The cottage which we were so fortunate as to secure, exactly suited our wants. It consisted of only three rooms, besides a kitchen. The rooms were all on the same floor. One of them was spacious, and not only picturesque but handsome. It formed three-fourths of our interior space, and the

other rooms opened into it. The cottage was well furnished, and stood very close to the sea, in one of the prettiest spots in the world. But certainly its greatest advantage to us was the smallness of the price we had to pay for it.

In this convenient retreat we were attended by one old woman, who came each morning and departed each night. We had procured her services in the usual manner ; for, as it is almost needless for me to state, not one of our old staff of servants came forward in the manner which romantic writers represent as being customary in such cases. But we required very little attention ; all we needed was that some one should cook our meals, make our beds, and dust our landlord's furniture. It is true my father seemed to require some kind of personal supervision, but I filled

the office thus required better than any one else could have filled it.

In acting as his nurse, I found that patience was the principal qualification needed. Although he was but fifty-nine, and not in reality so shattered in health or spirits as many others would have been under the same circumstances, he yet chose, from a fancy of self-compassion or propriety, to assume a most extreme senility. He allowed his beard to grow ; he wore a high hat with his shooting-coat ; he discarded his favourite stick, and carried or leaned upon a crutch of ridiculous size ; he walked more slowly, and rounded his shoulders more than nature obliged him ; and, worst of all, he affected to be confused in his mind, and to lose his memory. I saw through all this, for I not only loved him, but understood him very well. When he tottered in his gait,

and leaned heavily upon my arm ; when he feigned having forgotten his spectacles ; or when he pretended not to recollect Hare Place ; I bore his behaviour with patience. I knew that his sufferings and misfortunes had been extraordinary ; that it would have been unreasonable to have expected that they should not have wrought some change in him ; and that his very affectation only took the place of extravagant grief, or irascibility, either of which might have been far more inconvenient.

I must explain what our means of subsistence at this time were ; for, as the reader knows, we were not living on the plunder gained from widows and orphans. The fact is, I had received my mother's legacy, and though it was not large in amount, it had yet served to pay off our private debts, and my father's legal ex-

penses; and the remainder, added to my English pay, yielded us just enough with which to live decently in the retirement of Pontac.

From this retirement, however, circumstances soon obliged me to emerge. I had been granted only six months' leave, but this was "in anticipation," as it was called, of my being accorded a further period, which should make up a total of fifteen months. Soon after my back was turned upon India, however, certain influence was brought to bear against me, and I was informed that I could have no more leave than six months in all. I wrote to Colonel Melnotte, telling him my situation, and begging him to procure me an extension. But he replied, with a coldness which greatly hurt my feelings, that he could not assist me; and that if my affairs positively

required my remaining any longer at home, my wisest course—he spoke as a friend—would be to go on half-pay.

I saw with bitter mortification what he really meant. Yet I would not then acknowledge that there was any sufficient reason for my leaving the regiment; and I determined to see what could be done at the Horse Guards. Accordingly I left my father, without much misgiving, and embarked for Southampton. I safely proceeded to London, and went in the first instance to the Horse Guards. There I was unable to see the adjutant-general, but was granted an interview with a clerk, secretary, or Jack-in-office, of the name of Spong.

This Spong was a middle-aged little man, unnaturally pale, and prematurely bald. When I saw him, he kept one hand in the

pocket of his trousers ; and, in the other, held a bundle of papers, which, from his inordinate gravity, might have been the portfolio of his office as commander-in-chief, secretary-at-war, and prime minister, all combined.

Having told him my business, he answered in an icy tone which he had learnt from one of his employers, "I'll make a note of it if you wish ; *but I am very short of officers in India at present.*"

I ground my teeth at his impudence, and told him that I must see the adjutant-general in person. To this, Mr Spong was good enough to consent ; and he told me I might see his master the following morning.

I employed the interval in inquiring at my uncle's chambers, at his club, and from his agents, whether anything had yet been

heard of him. Nothing had been heard, and I sought for consolation in the society of Helena, whom I found at home. She was very happy to hear that my father was comfortable, and that the Jersey cottage was so pleasant; and she told me that if I should ever find it necessary to be long absent from the island, she would instantly go there herself, and keep house for my father. I could scarcely forbear from telling her that I should be glad if she would choose for her visit some time when I was not absent; but I contented myself with thanking her for her offer, of the sincerity of which she afterwards gave the most satisfactory proof.

When I again went to the Horse Guards, I was received by the adjutant-general. But to my great disgust, Spong, one hand in his pocket, his other grasping the ima-

ginary portfolio, stood at the officer's right hand, and, with a meek voice, threw every possible difficulty in the path of my arguments. The adjutant-general at length rose, and in a loud voice, by which he drowned a certain evident embarrassment, said: "You see, Captain Allen, it's like this. Your colonel has asked for you to be sent out to the regiment; and if you are to be kept in England, we must see some very exceptional reason for it. I don't see that you have any such reason. The business which called you home is over, and therefore your duty is with your regiment."

As the gallant officer delivered these expressions, I saw Mr Spong stealthily smile, for which I resolved some day to punish him. However, I could only take my leave, and having told Helena the result

of the interview, and received her condolences, and a repeated promise that she would come to my father whenever I had to leave him for a longer period, I returned to Southampton, and in due course crossed to Jersey, and reached the cottage, where I found my father safe and well.

CHAPTER IV.

I now began to see many good reasons for selling out of the army. The colonel evidently wished me to do so, and having in imagination changed places with him, I could not disguise from myself that there was much to be said for his way of looking at the matter. I knew that I should not have liked as a brother officer a man whose father had been tried at the Old Bailey; and the answer—that he had been acquitted—would perhaps not have changed my opinion in such a case. So, instead of feeling angry with the colonel, I understood, and partly sympathised with him.

Still, I did not love or respect him any better than before. But I next considered the question from a financial point of view; and I saw the great advantage of having at my command the money I should realise by selling my commission. My inclination was to remain in England; my duty was to take care of my father. And with duty and inclination both pointing the same way, I resolved to send in my papers. I accordingly did so; and being thereupon granted an extension of leave, pending my retirement, my mind was set at rest with regard to India.

But a new heavy calamity, of a most unexpected kind, now befell us. My father one day received a letter from the new solicitors who had conducted his defence, saying that they had made "the unwelcome discovery that certain duties had to be

paid which had been overlooked by Mr Mahuish" (the former lawyer). The letter concluded with the advice of the solicitors that my father "should not torment himself, but meet the obligation calmly, and dispose of it."

Enclosed was a document, which we found to contain, a description of the property to which my father had long ago succeeded; an account of the manner of his succession; and an assessment of the duty to be paid on the total amount, at the rate of 10 per cent. The long and short of all this being, that the man Mahuish, who had for many years had the conduct of my father's affairs, had all the time omitted to pay the succession-duty on the Turpin legacy; and now his negligence had been discovered, just when my father, crushed by misfortune, was left with barely the means of subsistence.

The amount which was now claimed, together with interest, reached a sum to us very alarming; for it was nearly three times as much as our whole capital! The rascally carelessness of Mahuish filled me with indignation, which I was beginning to express, when my father further exasperated me, by assuming that exaggerated senility which I have described.

“He’s a good fellow, Mahuish,” observed he.

“Oh, a d——d good fellow!” answered I, giving the table a blow. Strange to say, this behaviour had a very good effect upon my father; for he immediately laid aside the air of a dotard, and began to discuss the situation in a sensible manner.

He was in favour of contesting the claim as long as that could be done without incurring expense; “for above all,” he very

sagely observed, "we must avoid going to law."

"Very well," said I; "and having contested it, as you say, and having got the worst of it, how do you propose to pay the money?"

"You will shortly have a considerable sum at your disposal," answered my father, after a pause.

"You don't mean to say," said I, "that you expect me to use my commission-money for such a purpose?"

"The money is certainly due, Tom," answered my father; "and as we are gentlemen, we must contrive to pay it."

"If you owed it to a tradesman," I rejoined, "what you say would be true enough; but as you don't owe it to any one, at least only to the Inland Revenue, I cannot see why you should be so scrupu-

lous. The money I get for my commission will be my own property ; you shall have the free use of it for any other purpose ; but don't propose begging yourself, and me too, merely on account of that scoundrel Mahuish."

Having administered this lecture to my father, I left him, and reconsidered the matter by myself. I carefully put to myself the questions, "What should a man of honour do in such a case as this?" and "How would a man of the world act?" and I came to the conclusion that the man of honour should satisfy a lawful claim, whatever the consequences to himself ; and that a man of the world, in view of the inconvenience of having constantly to live abroad, would perhaps do the same. Besides all this, the money which I was about to receive, did in a certain way belong to my

father, and not to me ; for it had originally come out of his purse.

I went back to him, and told him I would do exactly as he advised. Nevertheless, I was much inclined to stipulate that this should be only so long as he continued to appear rational.

My father answered that his resolution was formed ; that if the money was fairly due, he intended to pay it ; that, as far as he could see, there was not any hurry at present ; and that I could go to London and see whether any help could be obtained from either of the lawyers—the honest, or the careless one. The latter, so my father observed, “was a man of large means ; and if he were honest, knowing our circumstances——”

Here I interrupted him by scornfully exclaiming, “Honest ! Not he ! Catch

him doing anything for any one but for himself ! ”

At this my father's chin began to wag in a manner which I knew threatened a relapse into senility ; so I shouted to him in a rough manner, yet with a dutiful motive, “ You know he's a rascal as well as I do, so don't say he isn't.”

Upon which he controlled himself ; his chin became firm, and we continued our conversation.

On the following day I left Jersey for the second time, and after a rough passage reached Southampton, and pushed on to London. I at once went to see the lawyer who had sent us the bad news ; but he could tell me very little that was to the purpose, and he advised me to see Mr Mahuish, who lived at Wolvenden. This advice I hastened to follow ; and I accordingly went

to Wolvenden by train, having first written to Helena to beg I might see her on my return, at an hour which I mentioned.

When I reached the office of Mr Mahuish, I could see no one to take in my card, so I ushered myself into the presence without waiting to be announced. As soon as the lawyer saw me, he gave an odd smile, and said, "Well, sir; what is it, pray?"

"Perhaps you don't recollect me," said I; "I am Captain Allen."

"Yes, I know that," answered Mahuish, and he commenced to whistle.

"Then I suppose you know why I've come to see you?" I resumed.

"About the succession-duty?" said he.

"Yes," I answered, and proceeded, with perfect good temper, to explain to him the consternation with which my father had heard of his latest trouble. "And as you,"

I said, "are after all at the bottom of it, I shall be much obliged if you can suggest anything for us to do."

"I've nothing to suggest," answered Mahuish; "he hasn't a leg to stand upon."

"How in the world did you come to forget such a thing?" I resumed. "Have you never had to pay succession-duty before?"

He now seemed to grow nervous, and said, "I must decline to continue this interview, Captain Allen. Your father knows how the mistake arose; it was through inadvertence. You asked me what was to be done, and I told you that he hadn't a leg to stand upon."

"And is that all you have to say?" said I, in a louder tone.

"That's all I choose to tell you," answered Mahuish.

“Then confound you——” I exclaimed, and clapping a large pewter ink-pot to his face, I seized him by the collar, and threw him, and his chair with him, on to the floor. As he lay on the ground, a stream of ink running from his face, he looked very much like a murdered man, and in fact he was feigning to be dead.

Having thus chastised him, I walked to the door, and finding the key on the inside, transferred it to the other side, and locking in the prostrate man of law, departed.

As I passed an outer office, where the clerks were generally seated, I noticed that no one was there; and as the hands of a large kitchen clock pointed to a quarter past one, I concluded that the clerks were at their dinner. A knowledge that this was the case accounted also for Mr Mahuish’s not having cried out while I was punishing

him. This adventure had a very invigorating and wholesome effect upon my spirits; for I had long felt the inconvenience of not having any individual person upon whom to vent my wrath and spleen.

In an excellent humour, then, I returned to London. There I found that I had to transact some business connected with the sale of my commission; also, my uncle's agents had heard a rumour to the effect that a traveller in Arabia had been assassinated; and they had telegraphed to a certain consul to ask him whether the report was true, and whether the victim happened to be an English colonel of the name of Allen.

Helena, as soon as I told her that I must remain in London for a few days, immediately reminded me of her own desire, under such circumstances, to pay my father a

visit. Wondering at her extraordinary constancy to the service of others, I consented—though with a show of regret—to her going; but I secretly resolved to return without warning to Pontac, as soon as my business was finished; and thus enjoy the happiness of having Helena in my house with me, if only for one day.

In due course my military business was concluded: I received £5000, and my name shortly afterwards appeared in the ‘Gazette.’ Also I had the satisfaction of hearing that the traveller who had been killed in Arabia, was a German geologist, whom the Arabs had put to death for stealing a horse. I was now a gentleman at large, with £5000 in my pocket; and I naturally felt a desire to enjoy myself, in a temperate fashion, and to leave succession-duties and all such disagreeable matters to take care of themselves.

CHAPTER V.

As I say, the possession of a large sum in cash, made me feel very much tempted to turn it to some more satisfactory purpose than that of adding to the coffers of the State. I tormented my brain in order to devise a scheme for immediately investing my money in a concern which should yield a handsome profit in the quickest time ; and I should no doubt have discovered something which would have seemed an opening of this kind, had it not been my misfortune to have never had many gamblers or betting-men amongst my acquaintance.

While I still lingered in London, I received a letter from Helena Chobham, which put entirely new ideas into my head. She wrote, urging me with what I thought a most provoking calmness, to find some employment in London,—to work for my living, in short. She pointed out many good reasons for my following this advice ; and reminded me that I had not the excuse of having to take care of my father—since she intended to remain in charge of him herself. “And I believe I understand him as well as you do,” she wrote. She ended her letter with the hope that I should not be angry.

To own the truth, I was not particularly pleased. For she had in a manner accused me of selfish indolence, and sentenced me to banishment. By degrees, however, I saw a great deal of sense in what she had said ; and as I had lately taken to accepting her

wishes as commands, I resolved to do what she desired. I sent her nearly all my money for her to hand to my father, and I reserved no more than £100 for my own stock. I told her, at the same time, that she was the good angel of our family, and that we all had no course but that of obeying her orders.

I may here say, that after the receipt of the money I sent in this letter, the succession-duty was paid to the last penny by my father; and that this punctilious discharge of the debt, though it may have reflected to our credit in the minds of a few charitable men, confirmed the rest of the world in the prevailing fit of belief that my father had saved something very handsome from the wreck of the Wolvenden Bank.

I now began my career as a really poor man, and the first difficulty I encountered

was my ignorance as to the mode of life I should assume. I had made several reductions in my personal expenses, but still I was living in a very good part of London, and keeping up the appearance of a gentleman. These inconsistencies I determined to remove at once. After some walking about, I engaged a single room on the third floor of a house, in a dingy street in Chelsea; and there I took up my quarters, with an air of perfect humility. I abandoned my military title; commenced living upon two meals a-day; and daily read through the advertisements of secretaryships, and similar posts which were to be had.

Nevertheless, I was not half in earnest. Perhaps I had a secret conviction that my poverty would not last for ever. I certainly believed that if my uncle ever did return, he would do his best for us; and

that if he died in the desert, my father was probably his sole heir. But I do not think the latter consideration dwelt in my mind at this time. I had been ordered to find work, and I endeavoured to find it.

Having ascertained that the secretaryship of one of the principal clubs was likely soon to be vacant, I went to the club in question, and made inquiries on the subject. I found a naval paymaster temporarily filling the post of secretary, which had that day been vacated. He received me with great politeness, but told me, when he heard what I wanted, that I had not the smallest prospect of success. He showed me a list of candidates, which, to my amazement, comprised no less than sixty names, including one baronet, and two general-officers.

I at once despaired of getting this post,

but I went through the form of making an application, and adding my name to the swollen list. The paymaster then told me of another smaller club which was in need of a secretary, and I proceeded to it.

As I was standing on the threshold-steps, wondering whom I should see, and what I should say, a rough voice greeted me with the words, "What's the pay of an acting shoeing-smith?"

In another moment I recognised Sir George Walnut, who had thus humorously accosted me, in recollection of a former inspection, when I had been unable to answer the question which he had now again propounded.

After heartily shaking his hand, I asked him how long he had been at home?

"Four months," answered he; "and I shall be precious glad to get back to India."

We then entered the club, which was of the inferior military order ; being mainly supported by young men who were waiting for something better—by certain older men, who preferred being of importance there to being of no importance anywhere else—and by a few men like the general, who had given their names to the institution out of kindness to some friends who had asked for that assistance.

Sir George having taken me to a retired corner, began to question me about my affairs ; and he displayed both frankness and delicacy in his method of doing so.

“I was very sorry to hear you had sold out, Allen,” he observed, “for I intended to have asked you to be my aide-de-camp.”

I thanked him very sincerely for the honour he had designed for me, and I felt some regret, which, however, I stifled.

Sir George talked on, evincing sympathy and friendship of a kind which is only truly valued by a man whose appreciation is sharpened by adversity. For my part I perceived that I had never before done the general's character any justice.

"Well, then, your old father's all right, is he?" said Sir George. "He's quite comfortable; that's a good thing. And how are you getting on yourself?"

I told him how I was situated, and in short, what errand had brought me to this club.

Having heard me, he remained silent for a few moments; and I asked him whether he thought that I had any chance of success.

"That's just it," said he; "I think you have; in fact, I could get you the billet myself." Seeing that he meant more than

his words had expressed, I begged him to explain further; whereupon he informed me in a few words, that if I did accept the post of secretary, I must not make too sure of ever being paid my salary; for that the affairs of the club were in rather a curious condition. "And," added he, "as I am on the committee myself, you may take my information for what it's worth."

I thanked him earnestly for his kindness, and promised not to act hastily.

Soon afterwards he took me to the secretary's room, and there introduced me to the gentleman who was about to resign office. Having done this, Sir George took his leave, but he first made me promise to breakfast with him in his lodgings the following morning.

The secretary, with whom I now found myself, was a half-pay captain of marines,

who had lost his left arm in action. He gave me the impression of being a man who could take care of himself in the world, and who was at once good-natured, and careful of his own interest. Having learnt my business from the general, he now gave me a cigar, and began to show me the sort of work which engaged his daily attention.

We were thus occupied when the steward of the club entered the room, and commenced business by informing the secretary that two cheques, each of them drawn by members of the club, had that morning been dishonoured. At this intelligence the captain only laughed, and gave me a wink. They then proceeded to transact other business ; having finished which, the steward said that he wished to speak with him on a private matter.

“You can speak before this gentleman,” said the secretary; “your wages I suppose, isn’t that it?”

“Yes, sir,” answered the steward.

“Well, I can only give you £10 on account,” said the secretary; whereupon the steward looked miserable, received the money, and withdrew.

He had hardly disappeared, when a violent knock was delivered at the door, and a sallow youth, dressed in the extremity of a certain fashion, came in. “I say, Harris,” shouted he, “I want you to have up that cursed steward, and give him a wiggling!”

“What’s he been doing?” asked Harris, giving me another wink.

“Why, he had the beastly cheek to tell me not to smoke in the reading-room. I only looked in for half a second, to see

the 'Sportsman,' and I just held the cigar in my hand. He is such an impudent brute !”

“Oh, I must give him a talking-to,” said Harris. But at the same time he handed the youth one of those cheques which had just been returned from the bank. The youth seemed considerably abashed, but observed, with a few oaths—

“I told them I was going to draw it.” He then hastened from the room.

Upon which the secretary observed,—I don't suppose you'd like that sort of thing much ? The general told me to let you into our secrets.”

After hearing some more details as to his work, and so forth, as to all of which he enlightened me in the most candid manner, I took my leave, feeling considerably dispirited. I, however, consoled myself with

reflecting that I had found a friend in the general; and I looked forward hopefully to deriving benefit from his influence and advice.

CHAPTER VI.

I FOUND Sir George Walnut living in what is called a flat. This flat was built in a convenient part of the town ; and as Sir George was unacquainted with European comfort except as it is understood in India, he was very well satisfied with his quarters. Another circumstance greatly contributed to his ease, and that was, that he was attended by an excellent valet, who exactly understood making him comfortable. It has been observed a very great number of times, each time with an assumption of originality, that the character of a master may be judged by seeing his servants.

The observation, though not particularly profound, may certainly be admitted to be, as a very general axiom, just. It is fair to add, however, that Sir George gave his servant, Frank, very excellent wages.

In India we had often made merry about the general's domestic life; declaring that he used to eat his meals seated on the ground, in his verandah; that he drank water out of his hands; shaved the top of his head, as well as his chin; and said his prayers upon a little mat, at sunset. I had myself taken part in inventing such witticisms; especially sometimes after an unusually harassing "night surprise;" but now, coals of fire were heaped on my head.

Sir George, when we were alone together, remarked, "Your difficulties won't last long, Allen; the uncle must turn up sooner or

later. I never had any relations that I can remember ; only a step-father who gave me my outfit as a cadet. Why don't you invest some of your old father's money, or your own, in getting hold of the uncle ? Send a dragoman, or a dervish, or some chap of that sort, with some coolies, to hunt him up. Three or four hundred rupees, judiciously laid out, ought to gain some intelligence of him. Have you communicated with the consuls everywhere ? Have you done everything you can think of ?”

I told him I had done what I could ; but that certainly I had not thought of a “dragoman or a dervish” before.

“I know an old fellow at Cairo,” resumed the general, “a Frenchman from Pondicherry, and a Mahometan, though he's a Gascon by birth. He's a thundering rascal, and talks every language ; I should think

he's the very man. He'll be glad to do anything for me, and I'll write to him at once. But, first, I must know the exact route your uncle's supposed to have taken."

We examined a map of Arabia together. I showed Sir George the direction my uncle was supposed to have taken, and we found the spot from which the last letter received from him had been dated. After a long perusal of the map, however, and after much speculation, Sir George gave it as his opinion that the colonel would never be seen again.

"But," said he, "write a letter to him in duplicate—or in triplicate will be better; and give me your authority to spend five hundred rupees, and I'll get hold of this thief of a dragoman, and do my best."

The general's very decided proposals raised my spirits, and inspired me with

hope, if not with confidence. I wrote the letters, and gave him the authority as he had suggested.

But Sir George was not content with this. After giving me some rather vague counsel "to think nothing about it,"—about my ruin—and "to just snap my fingers," he told me that as soon as I ran short of money, I must tell him of it. "For," said he, "I don't spend half my pay ; and I can always give you a shake-down in this place, which will be more convenient than having to bother your old father."

Warmly thanking him, and promising to report to him the further progress of my affairs, I took my leave.

As I walked back to my dingy lodging in Chelsea, I entered one of the parks which lay in the course of my road, and seating myself on a greasy old bench,—a proceed-

ing which I fancifully considered as in keeping with my fallen condition,—I fixed my eyes upon the ground, and abandoned myself to thought. “Why is it,” thought I, “that this idea of getting the secretaryship of a club is so firmly established in my mind? I may know something about wines and cigars, through having been mess-president, and I can keep regular hours; but I really don’t believe I possess any further qualifications. Why are there not more openings for men like myself, who might be made very useful to the State, but for rotten examinations and other restrictions?”

At this point my reflections were interrupted by the familiar sound of spurs, and looking up, I saw two well-built handsome troopers of the Blues pass by. They were talking together in very happy tones of an assault-of-arms.

“That isn’t a bad life, by any means,” thought I, as I looked after them, “and if it comes to a case of necessity, I can always try it.”

I then rose, and was about to continue my walk, when I perceived an elderly man, poorly dressed, but with as decided a military bearing as the two troopers who had just passed. He saluted me in a manner which had become obsolete, and said, “I hope your honour remembers me, for we have served together.”

I looked at his face, but time and drink had so altered it, that I did not recognise the features of Sergeant Munden until he had told me his name.

“I congratulate you, sir, on getting your company ; your troop rather, I should say,” said Munden.

“That’s long ago,” said I.

“It is some time ago since you got your troop,” resumed Munden; “but do you know, sir, though I’d only ninepence in the world at the time, I took the liberty of getting a drop with it, and drinking your good health.”

I thanked the impudent rascal, and asked him what he was doing at present?

“At present, sir,” answered he, “I am starving.”

I asked him whether he did not receive a pension?

“The pension of a private soldier,” answered he, adding, “I got into trouble with Sir James Hodder, the new colonel, and they reduced me.”

Upon this, seeing that he looked positively hungry, and that a tear stood on his cheek, I gave him money—a much larger sum than I could afford; yet I would not

give him less, chiefly because I intended to help him, but partly also because I was unwilling to take him into my confidence, as by giving him less I should to a certain extent have done. He thanked me with apparent emotion, and then seemed to hurry away.

I returned to my lodging in Chelsea, and there commenced writing to my father and to Helena. I had not long been thus engaged, when I heard a knock at my door, and a miserable little maid looked in and announced, "Mr Munden."

At the same moment Mr Munden walked in. His eyes were now no longer moist with tears, but twinkled with latent roguery, as I remembered they used to do in former times. Angry at this intrusion, I asked him "what in the world he wanted?"

Having closed the door, Munden replied,

“I did not like to detain you out of doors, speaking to you, but I wished to ask you whether you knew of any gentleman in want of a servant, and so I took the liberty of following you.”

“It was a liberty,” answered I; “I don’t want a servant, as you can see; and I don’t know anybody else who wants one, and I am not likely to.”

The ex-sergeant listened to this with perfect gravity, except that he was laughing with his eyes; and having heard me, he merely said, “I thank you, sir,” and withdrew.

Relieved of his presence, I finished my letters, and then sallied forth and posted them. I myself performed this task for two reasons: one was, that I wished to be certain that the letters were posted; and the other, that persons in my miserable

habitation were supposed to perform their own errands. I was absent no longer than ten minutes, and as I returned to my room, I thought, with a smile of satisfaction, of a certain frugal meal which I proposed presently to enjoy.

Directly I entered my room I saw that it had been disturbed; a horrid suspicion then entered my mind—namely, that I had been robbed. Running to examine my writing-case, where I had been keeping my little stock of money, I found it empty. My portmanteau also had been stripped, and, as I had used that as my wardrobe, I was thus plundered of all my clothes.

Furiously ringing the bell, I ran downstairs, and encountered the unhappy little servant-girl. I demanded of her whether anybody had been in my room to take away my things. But she only stared at

me, and then ran away as fast as she could.

But her mistress appeared on the scene, and having overheard my inquiries, gave a scream, and declared that she had heard some one leave the house only a few minutes before.

It was not till that moment, strange to say, that I thought of Munden. Then I felt certain that he had robbed me; and I hastened to the nearest police-station to give a full description of him, and to lodge my complaint.

A constable returned with me in order to investigate matters upon the spot. We found that almost the only articles which the robber had left behind him were my empty portmanteau (which I suppose he had found too bulky) and my empty writing-case (which I suppose he had not con-

sidered worth taking). But he had taken all my clothes, £92 in money, and a letter from Helena.

The money was all that I had, with the exception of sixteen shillings which were in my pocket. I ought, perhaps, to add that the loss of Helena's letter troubled me above everything else, but I cannot say that such was the case, and I loved her none the less. Ruined and robbed, I might now fairly say that I was "plunged in despair."

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CHAPTER VII.

I FELT the robbery, I think, more as a blow to my pride than as a fresh misfortune to my pocket. I was like a man who, swimming about after being shipwrecked, receives an unexpected blow on the head from a floating spar. It was an aggravation of my other sufferings, and seemed designed to try my patience to the utmost. But I determined not to give way; and though, as I have said, I was "plunged in despair," I soon rose to the surface again, resolved to

Take sea against a host of troubles.

So, after a good night's rest, in which,

from wisdom and despondency mingled, I first indulged, I began to consider my situation. "What could I do?" soon resolved itself into another question—"To whom should I turn for help?"

My first impulse was to hasten to Sir George Walnut, who had sincerely offered his friendly aid should I ever require it. I was reluctant, however, to impose myself on such a generous and worthy man until really compelled to do so. So I sat down and enumerated every other person whom I could call, for the sake of argument, my friend. I began my list with Helena and my father. Common pride withheld me from asking for relief from Helena, who was rich; and common affection forbade my applying to my father, who was poor. Next after these two came my uncle. He, in military parlance, was non-effective. Then, with

regard to my other relations, Lady Susan Longstaffe was the only one who had made any show of kindness to us after the trial at the Old Bailey, and that kindness only consisted in her expending a vast deal of ink in a letter of condolence. She had said, "How I wish we were at Piepond Hall, and you could come and stay with us!" She was now in London, I chanced to know; but, when I contrasted in my mind the outward pity and the inward resentment with which she would probably receive me, I determined to make use of her only as a painful alternative.

The next friend who rose in my mind's eye was Mr Garbold; but I had heard that since his abortive attempt at matrimony he had retired into seclusion, I did not know where, and, moreover, I did not like asking him for assistance. Then I thought of my

army acquaintances—my brother officers,—and the thought was most galling. Since my misfortunes, not one of them had ever written to me—except the colonel, when he had suggested my retirement ; and I knew as well as possible that I was forgotten. “Allen? Yes, we had a fellow named Allen ; he used to be called ‘Barbara.’ His father lost every sixpence, and he gave all the subalterns a step.” That was my epitaph in the regiment. So, after counting up my friends, I found them few enough. I must explain, however, one omission which I must appear to have made. Mr Ratcliff was more entitled to be called my friend than I was entitled to be called his : for at this time he had more than once tried to find me, as I afterwards learnt ; while I, so striking and absorbing had been the events following upon the

voyage home, had, to tell the truth, forgotten him.

Thus the list which I was able to compile was unsatisfactory ; and I was fain to bring my thoughts back to the general, who was ready to befriend me, and close at hand to do so. It was only, as I have said already, consideration for his generous character which made me endeavour, before going to him, to think of some one else upon whom to fasten. But necessity overcame all my scruples, so I marched off to the flat, found Sir George Walnut, and told him all that had befallen me. When he had heard my story, he uttered expressions of the deepest indignation against Munden, whose ingratitude seemed to affect him rather more than did my own loss. "I only hope we may some day catch him," said he ; "and if he

turns out to be the thief, which on second thoughts I don't think's actually certain, I hope he may get what he deserves, which is hanging."

Sir George then offered to advance me any sum of money that I required; but he professed to agree with me as to the desirability of my getting work of some kind.

"What a thousand pities it was——" he commenced, and then made a pause.

I saw what he had intended saying, and supplied it for him. "That I sold out," said I. "No, general; I believe I was quite right there."

"You acted from a very high motive," said the general, "but I think it was overstrained. As to Melnotte, I wish I had been in command when he wrote you that letter, for it wouldn't have been sent.

But we won't speak of that," he continued ; "let us think what's to be done for you now."

After some silence he abruptly said, "I suppose you've never done anything in the literary line, have you?"

"In the literary line?" I repeated. "No, sir; never in my life!"

We both laughed, but Sir George proceeded: "Because I happen to have an acquaintance who has something to do with one of the newspapers—editor, or proprietor, or something of the sort."

"Well, sir," replied I, "it's impossible to know without trying; but I never have patience to read what other people write, and I'm afraid they'd return the compliment if I were to try writing myself."

"What of it?" resumed the general. "You write in a newspaper, and if people

don't read what you say, they buy the paper, and read other parts of it. You just see what you can do. But first I must get hold of Drinkwater, and ask him to dine."

"Drinkwater! not Hyslop?" I exclaimed, recalling that schoolfellow who, as the reader may remember, had disgusted me by changing his name when we were at Eton together.

"Drinkwater is his name," answered Sir George, who continued, "I don't know exactly what he is, but I heard that he got his money from a paper. He's a well-informed man; has a very good opinion of number one, but that won't hurt us, will it? I'll send Frank to ask him to dine."

Having despatched his servant, the general gave me a cheroot to smoke, and

entertained me meantime with a description of his adventures in the Indian mutiny. His account was full of hair-breadth escapes which he had made; of desperate engagements in which he had borne a part; and of personal gallantry which he had himself displayed. For, most strange to relate, although the general possessed true bravery, he did not possess any of that other quality so commonly associated with bravery; but was somewhat given to boasting. This tendency had made him many enemies; and had had a most injurious effect upon his promotion. Nevertheless, it was very true he had been wounded in the thigh with a lance, and in the chest with a bullet; and that he had been hanged, (as he was never tired of telling), but fortunately saved at the critical moment.

For his behaviour on the occasion of the hanging feat which I have just mentioned, he had recommended himself for the Victoria Cross ; and had he himself kept quiet, and allowed the affair to be noticed only by the proper authorities, he would have certainly received that decoration. So, knowing as I did that all his bragging was, strange to say, of the truth, I listened to his anecdotes with a becoming respect.

Presently his valet Frank returned, bearing a note from Drinkwater, who accepted the general's invitation to dine with him that night at eight o'clock. Promising to return at that hour myself, I took my departure.

On my way home, I amused myself by thinking of the possible result of my introduction to this Drinkwater. I supposed that he might be a relation of my former

schoolfellow, but I did not imagine that it could be Hyslop himself, again transformed. When I had reached my dingy habitation, I found a detective waiting to see me.

He told me that a man answering to my description of Munden had been heard of, and that he did not despair of capturing him. He furthermore hinted pretty plainly that he would be glad of some pecuniary encouragement; but circumstances compelled me to discountenance this desire, as very improper on the part of a public servant; and he left me, his face evincing disappointment, mingled with suspicion.

And now a new embarrassment presented itself. How, or whence, was I to procure evening clothes in which to appear before the general that evening? My heart sank within me.

After a little reflection, I remembered

how, at a regimental dinner in former days, we had been very facetious at the expense of Orwell, the riding-master, who had appeared in a suit of clothes which he had hired for the occasion from a Jew. I bitterly determined to follow his example, selling my watch, if necessary, in order to meet the charge ; for though Sir George promised to lend me money, he had not yet done so. I had actually risen for the purpose of carrying out this resolve, when I reflected that, after all, my having been just robbed of my evening clothes was a very reasonable excuse for my not having any. I congratulated myself that this second thought had saved me from acting in a very absurd manner.

I had another difficulty of the same kind to face, which was that I had no clean shirt. I took off the one I was wearing,

and debated whether I had time to wash it; but I decided that this was an impracticable expedient. Then, having put the detested garment on again, I rang the bell, and calling for the landlady, requested her to send out and purchase me a shirt; for which I gave her ten shillings, and lent her the collar I was wearing as a guide to size.

As I gave these directions I endeavoured to smile, in the manner of a well-to-do individual temporarily reduced to an amusing shift, but I believe I could not conceal my embarrassment; and she did not at all help me, for she returned my distressed smiles with an angry stare. However, she procured me my shirt for eight shillings and sixpence; and having attired myself in it, and made the rest of my toilet as decent as I could, I walked off to dine with the

general, and having the misfortune to get my boots heavily splashed with mud in crossing a street, I had them cleaned at a cost of one penny.

I trust that no reader will feel angry with me for the tone in which I have described these petty misfortunes ; for I should be sacrificing the truth were I to say, either that I laughed at them at the time of their occurrence, or that I am now in the habit of recalling them with a smile.

CHAPTER VIII.

DIRECTLY I was presented to Mr Drinkwater, I recognised him as my old school-fellow. He took rather longer to furbish his memory ; and I believe the reason was, that although he was at that moment a stout, bald-headed, full-grown man, he still recollected, with resentment, certain treatment which he had received from me when we were boys ; and was anxious, not so much to forgive, as to appear to have forgotten all that concerned me ; including such kickings, stonings, hair-pullings, or twistings of arms, as he had most deservedly suffered at my hands.

So at first he looked puzzled, contracted his brow, blinked his eyes, and kept his hand passive in mine. Had I then taken him by the collar, and exclaimed, "What a sneak you are, Drinkwater!" I verily believe it possible that, in his great astonishment, he would have cried out: "Pax! Pax! I was only chaffing, Allen."

I did not try the experiment, however, for our former positions were now reversed, I having to conciliate him. In due course his recollection returned to him; he smoothed his brow, wreathed his face in smiles, and tightened his grasp of my hand.

I could not resist asking him how he came to have laid aside the name which he had once taken such trouble to assume. He replied that he had not altogether laid it aside; but that an aunt of his had left him some property, with the understanding that

he reassumed the family name. "So that really my proper surname," said he, "is Drinkwater-Hyslop-Drinkwater, which is certainly rather long."

"Well, I've heard of a double-barrelled name," observed our host, Sir George, "but yours seems to be a sort of six-chambered one! Never mind, 'what's in a name?' My own is rather a singular one; though I have no intention of changing it."

In the course of dinner, Sir George began to lead up to the accomplishment of his design in having brought Drinkwater and me together. "I suppose you're very busy in the morning," said the general to Drinkwater; "or do you work principally at night?"

"Our people work all day," answered Drinkwater; "but I don't do very much myself, except look after the £ s. d."

“Not a bad department either,” observed Sir George. “Now how long,” said he, “did you take to get to the head of the thing? How long, I mean, does it take a man of average ability to make himself independent by writing?”

“Not by writing, Sir George,” answered Drinkwater, cheerfully; “by mangling and ironing, I suppose you mean. I started our laundry myself, only last year.”

“Oh! you call it a laundry then?” said the general, looking puzzled, but willing to see any joke that might appear.

We soon discovered from Drinkwater, however, that his laundry was not a literary fancy, but a literal reality.

Sir George, overcoming his amazement, then asked him, whether he was not connected with one of the weekly newspapers?

Upon which Drinkwater grew red, and

replied, "that he had been, formerly ; that he still had something to do with the advertisements."

"Then you're not the editor?" said the general.

"Oh dear, no!" answered Drinkwater ; and he at once turned the conversation back to the laundry ; nor did we extract from him any more as to the subject in which we were interested.

When Drinkwater had taken his departure, Sir George said to me, "Why, the fellow's a *dhoby*!"¹ This is a queer world, certainly. Never mind, we must try something else. Who's this Mr Ratcliff, that you met on your homeward voyage?"

"Mr Ratcliff !" I repeated,—“ why, I never thought of him ! I had forgotten all about him, sir, till you said something at

¹ A native washerman in Bengal.

dinner about common-sense. I'll go and find him to-morrow morning."

"Do," said Sir George, "and ask him if there is any common-sense method of setting you on your legs."

Having by this time smoked a reasonable number of cheroots, I rose to depart, lingering, however, a few moments, in the hope that Sir George would remember the loan which he had promised me. He had apparently forgotten it, though an open cheque-book lay upon his desk; and I did not choose then to remind him of my necessity, for fear that by so doing I might leave in his mind the impresssion that I was importunate, and had pestered him. So I walked back to Chelsea, and to my hated abode there, having exactly three shillings and ninepence in my possession.

Early the next morning I received another

visit from the detective. He came to say that the man of whom he had been in search, was a prisoner in the Bow Street police station; and that I was requested to go there in order to identify him. I went to Bow Street, and was there confronted with a long-legged ruffian, in whom I was invited to recognise Munden. It was not he; nor could I claim as my own, any of the miscellaneous property which had been found upon him.

When the prisoner had heard this, he exclaimed, "Thank God, I've found an Englishman at last!" and offered to shake my hand.

As I was leaving the police station, I was struck by the appearance of a woman, who had just been discharged from custody. She had a companion with her, who was expressing the joyousness of freedom by

waltzing along the street, to the great inconvenience of the other foot-passengers ; but the woman whose face had attracted my gaze was walking along very slowly ; and as her eyes were downcast, I had a good opportunity of looking at her more closely.

She was poorly but neatly dressed ; and her hair, unlike that of her companion, was arranged in a graceful sort of fashion, seldom affected by any but the more respectable classes. But it is high time that I should explain why she specially excited my curiosity. It was a very difficult thing to believe, yet I felt convinced that this discharged prisoner was no other than Mrs Vish ! She presently looked up, and seeing me, uttered an impious oath expressive of wonder.

“ Mrs Vish ! ” I exclaimed. But emotion made her silent.

At that moment her female companion finished dancing, and, coming up to us, asked of Mrs Vish, "Who is it, dear?"

Mrs Vish was still silent, and the other went on to say, "What's he going to stand, Sally? Tell him we're two poor milliners as wants to borrow a crown, very particular."

Not at all relishing this conversation, and the publicity which attended it, I asked Mrs Vish to tell me where I could find her at a future time; upon which she handed me an envelope, on which her address was written. "'Mrs Knight,' ask for; and promise you'll come," said she, with suppressed agitation.

I promised accordingly, and walked away. As I left her, I raised my hat; but the compliment seemed to embarrass her, for she turned crimson as she acknowledged my bow.

I will not trouble the reader with all the reflections in which I indulged after this extraordinary meeting. What Mrs Vish's adventures had been since the time when she invited me, as a boy, to elope with her, and what her career had been before that time also, will soon be shown ; at present I must proceed with my own history.

After leaving Bow Street, and poor Mrs Vish, I went in search of Mr Ratcliff. At his club I learnt his place of residence, and having proceeded thither, found to my great satisfaction that he was at home. He received me in a very friendly manner ; but as soon as I began telling him of my ruin, he informed me that not only did he know all about it, but that he had known something of it at the time we were on board ship, when he had greatly admired my composure under misfortune.

Having asked him to explain how this could have been, he told that the Madras newspapers had given a full account of the bank directors who had been arrested, and that he had supposed that of course I knew all that had happened. When I had in turn explained how it came to pass that I had known nothing, he said: "I am really disappointed; for what at first attracted me to you, if you'll allow me to say so, was the extraordinary fortitude which you seemed to display in adversity,—fortitude which I considered nothing less than '*common-sense*' of a high order, and therefore highly admirable. Something certainly appeared to weigh upon your mind, but you seemed to struggle with it; you never appeared to give way to it; and I looked on, and watched it all with the greatest admiration, I assure you."

“This *common-sense*, Mr Ratcliff,” I answered, “you seem to apply to everything.”

“There is nothing to which it is not applicable,” answered he.

“I wish I had the secret then,” I observed.

“It’s no more a secret than any other quality,” answered Mr Ratcliff; “than sensibility, humour, obstinacy.”

“But still, I’m afraid it’s not transferable, not communicable.”

“Why, no, not generally speaking, or there would be an end to all difference of opinion. Still, many people waste their whole lives in *trying* to transfer common-sense to others.”

“Well,” said I, “I wish you would at least tell me what a man possessed of common-sense ought to do in my situation? For, hang me if I can see how

common-sense is going to supply me with bread and cheese ! ”

“ Bravo ! ” said Mr Ratcliff, “ I am glad you’ve delivered yourself of that at last ; for I knew that was what you were driving at. Well, let’s see. A common-sense way of supplying you with bread and cheese ; or, we’ll say, with a comfortable means of subsistence, suited to your habits of life.”

“ Exactly,” said I, smiling.

“ Then, in the first place,” said Mr Ratcliff, “ I must trouble you to tell me all your private affairs, which perhaps you won’t care to do.”

I replied, that that was only fair ; and at once told him all that I thought it necessary he should know.

He heard me with great attention ; but said “ that he must throw up the case,”

unless I could find it in my heart to supply some matters which he was sure I had suppressed.

Upon this, I revealed, with some hesitation, a few facts relating to Helena Chobham. I told him the circumstances connected with her unfortunate marriage ; and extolled her extraordinary amiability of character, her practical and pure benevolence, and her heroic resignation and patience.

When I had finished this enlarged account, Mr Ratcliff observed : “ Mrs Chobham must be a very sweet and noble lady ; and as I have no doubt she thinks you a very sweet and noble young man, you don’t require a soothsayer to tell you more on that point. But really as to the present question of bread and cheese, I can only give you one piece of advice ; and that is, —to hold up your head ! ”

“To hold up my head !” I repeated.

“Yes,” cried Mr Ratcliff. “Not to go poking about in little lodgings, sending out to buy shirts, and eating a big breakfast to last you till dinner-time ; but to give yourself more airs than you ever did before ; to look up your old friends, treat them as if you didn’t care a fig for them, and at the same time get all you can out of them. Go and call on Lady Susan Longstaffe, and tell her you mean to dine with her twice a-week.” (Here he raised his voice to a louder pitch.) “Go to your tailor, abuse him well, and say that you never mean to pay him ; then let him make you some new clothes. Go and take possession of your uncle’s chambers, and say they belong to you ; and tell the old general you can take care of yourself ; and do so. Why, my dear Allen, men’ with a quarter of your

chances, would have enough of the common gambling instinct to see that all must come right before long; and that the ship must come in!"

I was thoroughly infected with his enthusiasm, and the tears stood in my eyes as I shook his hand.

"As to ready money," he resumed, "*as to low, filthy lucre for present everyday purposes*, if General Walnut doesn't give you as much as you want, come to me, and you'll find I'm consistent, if no other man in the world is!"

I told him very earnestly that he was a true friend.

"Of course I am," said he, "or I shouldn't pretend to be a friend at all: and now," he said, as if in conclusion, and with peculiar significance in his manner, "I have to catch the train, as I'm going down to Windsor."

“To Windsor!” repeated I. “What are you going there for?”

“To be rewarded, to be sure!” shouted Mr Ratcliff, almost crying with self-complacency.

Having again warmly shaken his hand, I left him ; in my heart wishing him and his common-sense all manner of prosperity.

CHAPTER IX.

UPON a further consideration of Mr Ratcliff's scheme, I saw that it was rather bold than hazardous. To try it, suited my fancy very well; and any passing doubts that I may have momentarily entertained, were set at rest by the comfortable reflection that Mr Ratcliff "was consistent, if no other man in the world was;" that he had the full courage of his opinions; and that, in short, he was standing in the background, purse in hand, to give substantial support to my experiment. I now began to view Sir George Walnut, and the gentle Helena, in the

light of timorous counsellors, who meant well, but were not ready with resource; and I reproached myself with weakness of character, in not having, of my own accord, fallen into Mr Ratcliff's plan.

That plan I proceeded to put in practice. On returning to my lodging, which to my new frame of mind appeared more dirty and wretched than ever, but excited only a pleasant kind of contempt, I gleefully broke the seal of a letter from the general, and found myself in possession of a handsome sum of money, "which I was to repay," so said the letter, "as soon as I was a rich man." Steeled by Mr Ratcliff's creed, I looked on this compact as little less satisfactory for the general than for myself.

Previous to going in person to thank Sir George Walnut, I wrote a few lines to my

father, and to Helena. My father, I knew too well, had enough of "the common gambling instinct" to view such an experiment as mine with perfect calm; but with regard to Helena, I thought it advisable not to lay bare my full intention to her. So I merely told her that I should remember her kind wish to see me employed in some respectable trade, but that for the present I intended to economise, principally by living in my uncle's chambers, from which I could at any moment sally forth in quest of employment.

I had just finished this letter, when my landlady sent up her bill, with a request "that I would please settle it before I went out."

I received this message very good-humouredly, and sending for the woman, gave her the cheque I had just received,

and desired her to get it cashed at once. I also told her that my bedroom was too small, and that I should leave her that night or the following day.

Upon this she became exceedingly polite and pleasant, saying, "that she knew very well her bedroom was not fit for a gentleman like me ; but that she would do her best endeavour to make me more comfortable."

As soon as I had obtained the change from my cheque, I discharged my bill, and went in search of Sir George Walnut. When I inquired for him at the flat, I found that he was not there, but had left a message for me, saying that he had gone into the country for two days.

* Thereupon I resolved to pay my visit to Mrs Vish. I learnt from the envelope which she had given me, that she lived in

a place called "Crow Court," in the neighbourhood of Drury Lane. I discovered this court after some difficulty. It consisted of about twelve high but narrow houses, forming three sides of a square ; and was approached by a dark passage, which connected it with a neighbouring street. Opposite the side at which this passage entered, was a row of iron railings and boards (in a state of great dilapidation), which fenced the court off from an open space, where the foundations of some new houses were being laid.

I sadly reflected—though in an appropriately modern strain—as to the vicissitudes which could possibly have brought the once sprightly Mrs Vish to retiring to so sad a haunt. I looked round in the hope of seeing some sign, not of refinement, but of diminished squalor, which might point out her particular abode ; but I looked

in vain. The houses inclined inwards towards their summits, and were supported by beams. Patched under-garments were hung out to dry in certain places; and the court seemed to be principally occupied by numerous families of lodgers. There were three or four shops, however. A rag and bone shop; a dirty kind of eating-house, with two egg-cups and a coffee-pot in the window; and an emporium for farthing toys, apples, braces, and cheap illustrated newspapers. To this emporium I was directed, by a man who told me that "mother Knight and a hunchy-backed party" lived there.

I walked in, and told my business to a careworn woman of forty or so, who called in her husband (a dwarf). He led me up a flight of stairs, and, having knocked against a certain door, left me. In another

instant I stood before the unhappy "mother Knight," otherwise Mrs Vish. My presence must have recalled to her mind many very distressing associations, but she at first tried to hide her emotion in a very foolish and repulsive manner, accosting me with, "Well, old fellow! so you went before the beak this morning, did you? What was it about?"

I replied that I had met with misfortunes, and that I was afraid she had done the same.

"Why, of course I have," she answered. "Misfortunes! Well, I like your cheek!" Here she could play this part no longer, but began to weep hysterically, and continued to do so for several minutes. When she had a little mastered her grief, she clasped my hand, as I stood sadly watching her, and then exclaimed between her sobs,

“It’s so—kind of you; I’m so—wretched, I didn’t mean to—offend you.”

I answered with perfect sincerity that she had not offended me at all. “But,” said I, “if it won’t upset you, I wish you could tell me something of what has happened. Don’t say a word if it distresses you.”

“Oh, Allen,” said she, “you’re a good fellow.”

“I only hope I may be able to help you,” said I; “but I must first know what’s happened.”

After a little pause, Mrs Vish said, “How would you like me to tell you my whole life, from beginning to end?”

I replied that such a narrative would interest me beyond measure, and that it was precisely what I wished to hear.

“You’re not easily shocked, I hope,” said poor Mrs Vish.

Having satisfied her on this point, I begged her to proceed. After a few further preliminaries she began to relate, with some little variation of the words, the following:—

HISTORY OF MRS VISH.

“I suppose I needn’t tell you when I was born; it was some time before you were, but not quite a hundred years ago. Well, I was born in a remote part of Westmoreland. My father was what is called in that part of the country, a ‘statesman.’ His family was a very—well, a very decent one; respectable, and all that. Two or three of his ancestors might have made their sons gentlemen, if they had chosen; but none of them were ever so ambitiously inclined. Each eldest son lived just like his father, in an almost uninterrupted chain.

That is, each one lived his uneventful life in comfort and respectability ; helping his father as soon as he was old enough to do so ; closing his parent's eyes when they died ; marrying a woman of his own rank in life when he reached a suitable age ; then getting old in his own turn, and making way for children who had grown up just as he had done.

“ This orderly round of life was followed through some generations without variation, until my grandfather, having lived in the same manner, reached that stage in life when members of the family were expected to choose their wives. He would, no doubt, have acted just as his ancestors had done, but to do so, one essential element was wanting — namely, a woman in the neighbourhood whom he thought would suit him as a wife. To him, this was a most pressing

difficulty. It was not in his nature to wait; for he considered the operation of marrying just in the same light as that of getting in his corn, or thatching his roof; that is, as something which had to be done at a certain season. He therefore made an extraordinary effort to accomplish the end he had in view. He made a descent into Scotland, where some relations were settled, and thence selected, and in time married and imported into Westmoreland, an amiable girl whom he had persuaded to be his wife. This woman, who was his first cousin, used to make him very happy, I believe; but yet, I attribute our family misfortunes, including indirectly my own, to this marriage; for I believe in Race, and this was a cross in the breed.

“My grandfather died, leaving two sons to succeed him. These two, instead of

settling down to that mode of life which was to be expected, were constantly plotting for their own advancement. The younger, my father, was the more ambitious of the two. When he was scarcely twenty years old, he began to make expeditions to the town of Carlisle; and there made the acquaintance of a certain upholsterer's daughter. During a whole year, he made frequent journeys for the purpose of seeing this young lady, and I suppose paid her great attention. Suddenly, however, his visits and his attentions ceased. It was said, or conjectured, that having engaged himself to the upholsterer's daughter, he had then basely jilted her.

“However that may have been, his sweetheart was not to be repulsed. Accompanied by her brother, she came to our village and bearded my father in his den.

It then appeared that what they sought for was nothing less than justice at the hands of my father. He, either from his own awakened sense of honour, or from fear of the personal consequences should he persist in his desertion, complied with the reasonable demand made of him. My mother and he were married, and I appeared in the world soon afterwards.

“My early recollections of my mother are not at all pleasant; I am afraid they are exactly the reverse. Both she and my father were addicted to drink; though, strange to say, he had the reputation of being a very sober man; the reason being that he never began drinking till late at night, after supper, and used in consequence to be very grave and melancholy all the following day; thus appearing to be sadly watching his wife, who used to begin her

drinking directly after breakfast. Nevertheless, my mother was certainly the worse of the two. I recollect on one occasion, how, being seized with a maudlin compassion for me, she made me drink a portion of some gin-punch with which she was comforting herself; and, to say the truth, at the age of seven I was made as tipsy as I have ever been in my life!

“I must now describe a very horrible tragedy. Perhaps it mayn’t sound much, told to you calmly like this; but I can tell you it was more horrible than anything you can conceive. My mother was in bed, rather overcome with liquor, and I was playing with a kitten before the fire, when my father came in drunk; and asking me why I was not in bed, took up a gridiron and began beating me with it. My mother, who, in her cups, but at no other time, was ex-

ceedingly kind to me, no sooner saw me being thus treated than she jumped out of bed, and, seizing my father by the hair, commenced slapping his face with all her might. He was about to retaliate with the gridiron, when he suddenly started back, drawing me after him, as though his wife had just shown symptoms of leprosy or the plague. The poor wretched woman was in flames ; her night-dress having fluttered into the fire as she was attacking her husband. Oh, Allen ! if you could have seen her !

“My father, who was never remarkable for presence of mind, and who was now stupefied by drink as well as fear, at first made no attempt to save her, and the unhappy creature fell to the ground, screaming, ‘Put me out ! put me out !’ My horrified father at length mustered enough energy to approach her with a can of water,

which, however, he handled so clumsily, that he only struck her on the head with it, spilling most of the water upon the floor. But the neighbours who soon ran in, did their best, poor souls; also a young surgeon: oh, God bless him!"

[At this point I begged Mrs Vish to proceed with the main facts of the story. Upon which she said, as if she understood my thoughts, "*Well, then, an old surgeon; and the devil fly away with him!*" She then became silent, impatiently tapping her foot upon the floor. I apologised for having interrupted her, and begged her to proceed, which she presently did.]

"My mother died in agony, whether you think it a good joke, or not. And now comes a very important incident in my history. The rector of our parish, when he heard what had happened, soon sent to my father

to say that he was willing to take me into his service as a kitchen-maid. My father at once consented, for the arrangement especially suited him, as he and his brother had decided to sell what property they possessed, and seek their fortunes somewhere else. So I was sent to Mr M'Leod. He was a man of large property, who, finding that he had become, he scarcely knew why, a clergyman, performed his parochial duties in a rough-and-ready fashion, expending most of his time in travelling and collecting pictures and other works of art. When I think of this, I still wonder that he found both time and opportunity to be of such use as he was; to be so kind to a little wretch like myself, for instance.

“When he first took me from my father, he sent me to an excellent village-school, which he had himself founded. Indeed,

my post of kitchen-maid was a sort of sinecure, really ; and only a convenient cloak with which Mr M'Leod chose to hide a generous and Christian action. He was constantly performing similar deeds of charity ; and whenever he appeared in the village, generally just for a short sojourn, he contrived to crowd into the time he spent there, more useful exploits of benevolence than many of his cloth could accomplish in a lifetime. Such acts were more effectual than anything else could have been in preventing the complaints which would otherwise have been made as to his always being away, wandering about. Mr M'Leod had a wife who was excellently suited to him ; and they might have been the happiest couple in the world, had they not been forced to endure one disappointment, which was, that they had no children. This cir-

cumstance will account for what I am going to tell you.

“As Mr M’Leod grew older, his visits abroad became rarer, and though he had by no means given up travelling, he took to staying a good deal more in his parish. It was then that he began to notice the little girl whom he had hastily befriended; and I may say, without vanity, that he found me very superior to anything he could have expected. You will not laugh when I tell you that I was beautiful; for you know that I was, once; and that, what’s more, you thought so! But beauty was not my only attraction. My education had been attended to with surprising care. The village-schoolmaster had expended more than his ordinary pains upon me; but the person who had chiefly interested himself in bringing me up, was Mr M’Leod’s curate.

I may tell you at once that I allude to Mr Vish. He not only examined me in the progress I was making at the village-school, but he also taught me French and Euclid, and how to play the harmonium for the church-choir. I believe his original object in taking such trouble was to please his superior, in whom he fancied he saw the design of adopting me as his daughter; but afterwards, as I progressed under his tuition, and improved in appearance and in manners, I believe he thought that he could shape me into a wife for himself. Well, whatever Vish's motives may have been, when Mr M'Leod first began to notice me, I was a very interesting, pretty little thing of seventeen; engaged nominally in cleaning up dishes and saucepans, but really occupied in having my mind cultured, and in playing the harmonium for the choir.

“‘And did Mr M’Leod ever adopt me for his daughter?’ you were going to inquire.

“He did not. But it was only my own imprudence, or misconduct, if you prefer it, which prevented him from doing so; for I know he often meditated it. When he found me as I have described, his first care was to place me on a more reasonable footing in his household. To begin with, he placed me under the charge of the housekeeper, with whom I associated and ate my meals, never going near the kitchen any more. But soon Mr M’Leod thought even this was not good enough for me. He desired me to live with him and his wife, as a sort of companion. I was given a good room, and the servants were told to call me ‘Miss Knight,’ instead of ‘Sally.’

“When Mr M’Leod had done all this, and

had made an unusually long stay in his parish, he went off on his travels again, and took me with him. He and Mrs M'Leod showed me all the wonders of Florence and Rome ; and I may say, by the way, that I was altogether disappointed with them.

“ Now that I was a member of the family, so to speak, I had every opportunity of learning Mr M'Leod's caprices, and studying his character ; and therefore I ought to have found out how to please him. All that I really need have done, I know, would have been to have always been perfectly simple. That was all he wanted, or expected from me. But you know, Allen, cunning is my second nature. Even at this moment, I know I am really interesting you, though I mayn't be exciting your sympathy ; and yet, I can't help trying to pile up the agony. That's the way I've gone

on all my life. I am so steeped in insincerity, that I believe if the end of the world was to come to-morrow, I should pretend to be ever so much more frightened than I was——”

At this point the poor woman gave way to tears. She sobbed violently, and at length became hysterical. I offered her a tawdry little smelling-bottle which lay upon the table, and attempted to calm her by the best means I could devise; but she begged me to leave her for half an hour, and I did so.

I passed away this interval down-stairs, in conversation with the dwarf (who worked in a back-room as a tailor) and his wife. They both pressed me, without any delicacy, to tell them who Mrs Vish was. “I tried to hear what she was saying,” said the dwarf, “but I could only

catch a word or two, here and there like."

I told him, with a haughtiness which I did not afterwards regret, that he had better mind his own business.

He answered, with a weary expression of face, peculiar to his kind, "Yes, sir; I'll mind my business. But I didn't know you were a gentleman till you spoke like that."

When I returned to Mrs Vish she was in a deep sleep, and I saw by the bottle at her side that she had been dosing herself with laudanum. Under these circumstances, I thought it well to leave her for that day, and I accordingly did so.

CHAPTER X.

WHEN I had left Crow Court and poor Mrs Vish, I proceeded to my uncle's chambers, having formed the resolution to take possession of them with as little delay and as little ceremony as possible. I found them locked up ; but an old woman who lived in the basement of the house came to me with the key. I told her that I was about to live in the chambers until Colonel Allen's return, and directed her to prepare the rooms for my reception at once.

At first she seemed rather taken aback, but by degrees she recognised me (for we had met before), and saying that she hoped

I was well, bestirred herself in making the rooms look more comfortable. My installation was thus peacefully accomplished; and having thus nine points of the law on my side, I wrote to my uncle's agents, telling them what I had done. In reply they merely told me, that a family arrangement of the kind I had made seemed to them very desirable. After this, I began to feel so exceedingly comfortable and prosperous, that, like a successful emigrant, I wished my less fortunate relations to come and share my prosperity. On second thoughts, however, I decided that my father might not readily fall into my plan of life, and that he would fare better where he was.

But I must for the present return to Mrs Vish. I went back to her the next day, in the hope that she would continue the narration of her history. I had expected to find

her still unwell, or at all events melancholy. Instead of this she was sitting sewing, with a cheerful industrious air, and greeted me with a laughing manner, in which no traces of recent care could be discovered.

“Well, sir,” said she; “shall I go on with my story?”

I begged her to do so.

She continued sewing for a few moments, and then said, “I suppose you believe all I told you yesterday, don’t you?”

“Of course,” answered I.

“Well, I’m glad of it,” said she; “for I’ve got into such a habit of telling lies, that I assure you I feel surprised when I catch myself speaking the truth. But you’re an old friend, and I like telling you everything—I feel as if it did me good.”

“I hope it does,” said I; “but please go on.”

She laid aside her needlework, and after staring at the fire-grate for a few moments, resumed her tale.

“I was saying that when I was fairly started in Mr M’Leod’s good graces, I should have been simple and unaffected, and then I should have got on. That was the great chance I threw away; for not only should I have pleased Mr M’Leod, and become his heiress, but also I should have formed my own character, which I can never do now. In constantly trying to seem a good girl, I should have become one in the end. Don’t you think so yourself, now? But, oh dear me! to Mr M’Leod I put on a dreadful overdone air of *naïveté* which did not deceive him one bit. I could even see that he disliked it; and yet, such is the everlasting folly of youth, I thought myself the cleverest—thought I could com-

pel him to take me at my estimate. You know this mistake on my part was partly owing to my long intercourse with Mr Vish, who, I had seen, always believed me to be just what I pretended.

“But of course deeds, more than manners or words, are what people are judged by in the long-run. I first displeased Mr M’Leod at Pisa; and it was through a man named Salekson, whom I met there. Do you know, Allen, it’s been my experience that the more odd a man’s name is, the greater rascal he is likely to be. Well, this Salekson (who was really an old - clothesman, or a money - lender, or something) somehow managed to make my acquaintance. He first spoke to me at the hotel, when Mr and Mrs M’Leod had left me alone for a few minutes; and the same evening he came and dined close

to us at the *table d'hôte*, and engaged all three of us in conversation.

“Mr and Mrs M’Leod replied to all he said with grave courtesy; while I was so foolish as to smirk and giggle, and flirt with him, you know. I could almost blush over it now! I don’t mean because of my indelicacy, but because of my shocking ignorance. After all though, you see, I had hardly ever spoken to anything in the shape of a man; and this Salekson appeared to me a very polished, smart sort of fellow. He didn’t appear so to other people, though; they weren’t so easily taken in. Mr M’Leod hated him. He would never dine at a *table d’hôte* again, and gave me an awful scolding. He said, ‘Sarah, why did you laugh in that vulgar way to the man at the *table d’hôte*?’

“‘Did I laugh? Do tell me, shouldn’t

I laugh ?' I asked, with that *naïveté* which so exasperated him.

" 'Laugh within reason, and to decent people, as much as you like,' he answered.

" 'But I thought he was so nice ; wasn't he nice ?' I went on. But Mr M'Leod wouldn't answer me, and only said something in Italian to his wife, and she gave me a horrid nasty look.

" We left Pisa directly after this incident, and went on to Genoa. There, whom should I see again but Salekson ? How my whole future might have been changed but for my persevering folly then, in not speaking to my patron, to my benefactor as he wished to be, telling him that Salekson was there, and begging his protection !

" They either did not know it, and were therefore indifferent ; or they did find it out, and wished to see how I should behave. I

am sorry to say I behaved almost as badly as I could have done. I secretly wrote to Salekson an anonymous note containing the mysterious words, 'Be careful; I am watched.' You may imagine the effect of such a communication. Salekson was careful, it was true; but, of course, he regarded my note to him more as an invitation than a caution.

"Accordingly, as I was one day visiting the Villa Pallavicini at Pegli, Salekson appeared. He pretended not to know either the M'Leods or me. Delighted with this romantic position of affairs, I resolved to have an interview with him; and I'm sure you will laugh at the simplicity I displayed. As Mr and Mrs M'Leod were entering a boat in order to explore the subterranean lakes, I declared that I was too frightened to accompany them.

Upon this Mrs M'Leod said she insisted on my coming ; but her husband observed, 'No, no ; let Sarah please herself ; we don't want her to be frightened.' He added something in Italian, and they left me alone. Wasn't that nice of them ?

"Salekson, who had been waiting, then came from a neighbouring grotto, where he had been concealed, and we were soon talking rubbish very happily. When the M'Leods returned, they found me once more alone, for Salekson had left me. They greeted me with/ironical kindness, and as they were going back to Genoa, talked more Italian than I had ever heard them talk before.

"A few days afterwards, the M'Leods started for England, taking me with them. I could not contrive to see Salekson before we went away ; but I wrote to him, telling

him that I was obliged to go, and that 'the course of true love never did run smooth.' He no doubt laughed heartily at my quotation; which he pretended to indorse all the same, and added a good deal of nonsense of his own, in a letter which he managed to have placed in my hand.

"On the journey from Genoa to Westmoreland, Mr and Mrs M'Leod continued to treat me with that ironical kindness of demeanour which they had lately assumed. But I thought I discovered in Mr M'Leod's manner certain signs of sadness, or regret, which you can understand; while in that of his wife I thought I could see a good deal of spite; though she was a kind enough old thing in her way.

"When we had returned to the rectory, I resumed that course of life I had followed

before going abroad ; but with this important difference, that I was once more sent to eat my meals with the housekeeper. I could see, too, that old Mr M'Leod was puzzled what to do with me, or, in other words, how to get rid of me.

“ It was now that Mr Vish began to show in his manner to me a new kind of interest. My assumed *naïveté* had always pleased him ; for though he may not have thought it quite genuine, he only put it down to girlish affectation, at the worst ; and thought it would all pass away. One day he came to me and blurted out : ‘ Sally, I’ve been talking to Mr M’Leod about you. What was it you did at Genoa to offend him ? ’

“ I gave him as favourable a version of the affair as I thought could tally with anything the M’Leods could have told him.

I said that I had met a man at Pisa, and then again at Genoa, who had always smiled at me, and seemed very nice. That I had liked him, and hadn't seen any harm in it, as I had hardly ever had any men to talk to before.

“‘Of course ; of course, dear ;’ said Mr Vish ; ‘and you don’t feel any interest in him now ; do you ?’

“‘I’ve quite forgotten him,’ said I ; which was a regular fib.

“Then Mr Vish began walking up and down the room ; but every now and then he stopped, and patted my head. At last he said : ‘I am going to leave Mr M’Leod, and set up as a private tutor. I have a promise of three pupils, and I know I shall get on. Will you come with me ?’

“‘What ! to be one of the pupils ?’ said I, in my *naïve* way.

“Mr Vish laughed very loud at this ; and said, ‘No, you simple little innocent Sally ! I mean, will you, will you——?’ Of course he was going to have said, would I marry him. But, of all things in the world, at that moment his nose began to bleed ; and went on bleeding so violently, that we could think of nothing else for the moment.

“Just then a servant came in to say Mr M’Leod wished to see me. Mr Vish waved his hand, and nodded behind his pocket-handkerchief, to tell me I could go. I found that Mr M’Leod’s business with me referred to the proposal Mr Vish had just been interrupted in making. For, before coming to me, he had told Mr M’Leod of his intention. Mr M’Leod spoke to me in very impressive, severe tones. He said that he was aware of Mr Vish’s design of making me his wife, and that he could not suffer

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things to go any further, without entering his most solemn protest against the plan, 'as the friend of Mr Vish, as a minister of the Gospel, and even as my well-wisher.' You know those kind of people say anything for a—what d'you call it?—peroration; and what he said about being my well-wisher was only a lot of rubbish, meant to sound well. Well, then, he went on to point out what he called the gross wickedness of a young woman like me, making an honest man wretched. I could have answered him in a way which would have rather surprised him, telling him that he had no right to blight my prospects just because of his prejudices. But you see, a moral old man thundering away at a friendless girl who isn't over-particular, generally has the best of it, even though he hasn't the most argument on his side;

besides, I really owed Mr M'Leod a great deal. I hadn't the impudence then, or the spirit, if you like it better, to retort; and all I did was to ask him, in a tremulous tone, 'What's the objection to me, sir, to marry anybody, please?'

"Mr M'Leod answered, 'A great many objections, Sarah. Mr Vish is not a man of the world, and I cannot allow him to be hoodwinked. Your birth, he may be willing to overlook; but if he only knew how very different your character is to what it appears to him! I have already felt it my duty to tell him some facts which came to my knowledge when we were abroad. Again, there's another thing—your circumstances. He may entertain the notion that I have thought of adopting you; and calmly, candidly, I have not the remotest intention of doing so.'

“That was about all he said ; and quite enough too. Soon afterwards I saw Mr Vish again. His nose had stopped bleeding ; and he told me that he had seen Mr M’Leod a second time, and had heard with indifference all that he had to allege against me ; that, under the circumstances, he had resolved to leave the rectory at once, and start on his new career ; that in the meantime, it would be well for me to wait a few weeks, in order to see whether Mr M’Leod intended to forgive me. ‘As for me,’ said poor Mr Vish, ‘I shall always be faithful to you, and to nobody else ;’ and I must say he kept his word.

“But this part of my life only bores you, does it not ? Well, let us leave off for a few minutes, while I try and arrange the sequel, down to the present time.—”

Here she came to a pause. I made a few

comments upon what I had heard; and I expressed the commonplace observation, that she had been to a great extent her own enemy.

She acquiesced, but observed that it was no use crying over spilt cream.

Soon afterwards she resumed the recital of her adventures, which, for convenience, I will continue in another chapter.

CHAPTER XI.

“WHEN my future husband advised me to remain, and see whether Mr M’Leod meant to forgive me, I have reason to know that the rector had said he should give me one more trial ; and Mr Vish, being poor, with the prospect of being poorer (for the income from his college-fellowship would disappear directly he married), thought the chance too good a one to neglect. But Providence upset these hopes altogether, for Mr M’Leod suddenly died in a fit of apoplexy.

“Soon after his funeral was over, I heard that he had bequeathed me £1000. I recollect it sounded to me a most astounding

sum of money, though now I know that, but for my own folly and ill-luck, the sum would have been forty times as large. But a thousand pounds was a good round sum for me. It wasn't such a bad marriage-portion for a hypocritical little kitchen-maid to bring to a gentleman who truly loved her. But I didn't bring it to him, that was the best of it—the worst of it, I mean.

“Before Mr Vish could get away in order to come to me—for he was very hard at work just then—who should appear on the scene but my father and uncle! I had hardly heard from my father once since I had left his roof; but he pretended to be overjoyed at seeing me again. He kept saying, ‘Why, isn’t she a fine girl now, Ben?’ and my uncle each time replied, ‘Why, isn’t she now?’

“Then they asked me to come with them to Edinburgh for a little visit. You see they’d just opened business there as wine merchants, and they wanted my capital to assist them. But I didn’t think of that then. I went with them, and old Mrs M’Leod wasn’t sorry to part with me, I know. As to poor Mr Vish, I did not altogether conceal from him the step I had taken. That is, you know, I wrote telling him what I had done, in a sort of way of my own.

“He wrote back, poor man, telling me ‘that we must wait and hope,’ and calling me ‘his noble, patient little wifey.’ I wasn’t a bit noble or patient, you know; but I meant to have a little change and excitement, before settling down to the humdrum life that was before me. I ought to say Vish hadn’t yet heard I’d got the

legacy in cash, or he might have thought very differently from what he did.

“ Well, I went off to Edinburgh, and before two weeks had passed, my father and uncle had borrowed £400 from me. Then they asked me to lend them more. I steadily refused, and my father one day gave me a blow in the face. Ah, well! he’s dead now, and I’m sure I forgive him; the brute! Well then, after he had struck me, I resolved to leave him; though not, as a matter of course, to go to Mr Vish. But you shall hear what took place.

“ One night I happened to be awake rather later than usual, when I heard a suspicious noise at the back of the house. Before rousing the household I thought I would peep out of the window, and try to discover what was going on. It was very lucky for me that I did so; for what do you think I

saw ? Oh ! I feel as if I should faint at the recollection !” [Pausing at this point, Mrs Vish tightened her lips, dilated her eyes, placed one hand on her brow, and the other on her breast, in a somewhat theatrical style, and proceeded.] “Allen, they were in the yard at the back of the house, digging a grave for me !” [She now again broke the thread of her narrative, in order to rebuke me for some signs of indifference which she thought I was exhibiting. “Are you made of stone ?” she demanded. I managed to reassure her, and she presently resumed her history.]

“I saw them digging my grave, I tell you. I could see them by the light of the moon ; and I could see my uncle examining a special-constable’s truncheon, which had belonged to my grandfather. Well, in this appalling, terrible emergency, I think I acted

with great courage—for a woman at least. Instead of attempting to leave the house, I quietly locked and bolted my door, then drew my bed across it, and placed the washstand on the bed. Then I went to the window (the other one which looked on to the street), and gently opened it. Oh, my heart was beating so that I could hear it! At that very nick of time a policeman passed. I called out to him, and told him that I was going to be murdered. Upon hearing this, he instantly began to ring the bell, and knock and kick at the door, at the same time springing his rattle. Another constable soon came to the spot, and simultaneously with his arrival my father and uncle opened the street door. I forget the exact excuse they gave; but they laughed very much, and pretended to treat the affair as a joke.

“The policemen, rather puzzled, kept asking me, ‘Do you give either of these men into custody?’ And I, after a good deal of hesitation, answered, ‘No, I don’t; but I’ll give you £5 between you, if you’ll get me safe out of this house, and put me somewhere where they can’t get at me.’

“‘She has robbed us of £500,’ observed my uncle.

“‘Steady, Ben,’ said my father, ‘it’s a cheque.’

“‘I was only joking,’ said my uncle.

“You may imagine that I was pretty glad to get away from them. The constables escorted me in safety to a kind of boarding-house, or hotel, in the old part of the town. There I remained for the rest of that night, intending to leave the place next day and return to Westmoreland, whence I could send for Mr Vish to come and marry me.

“But the next day came, and I found being my own mistress was so very pleasant, that I resolved to enjoy my liberty a little longer. At this house where I was staying—it was a temperance hotel—I fell in with a certain Kitty Baker. She was dressed as a widow, and said she had come to this house because she liked quiet. She and I became sworn friends—how, I can’t tell you. But she was a very amusing, cheerful girl; and, like me, had a good sum of money just then, and was very generous with it.

“When once we had got together, all thoughts of going to Mr Vish vanished—for the time, at least. Kitty and I soon found the hotel dull, and besides, we didn’t like the people who kept it; they didn’t suit us. So we agreed to go off somewhere else. We stayed at a few other places, and

at last came to London. There I lived with Kitty Baker in some lodgings, and we pretended to be very happy, though I believe we were both miserable; I know I was. You see, I daresay you'd like me to tell you a great deal about my adventures at this time, but I'm not going to do so. I'll imagine this is a book, and smooth things down. For though people who read books, nowadays, enjoy having the most horrid things hinted at, they won't stand being told plainly even things which they do every day themselves.

"Well, I never let Vish know where I'd gone to, and he was running about distracted. I met Salekson again, and I needn't tell you any more.

"Then I had a quarrel with Kitty, and left her. I spent all my money; Salekson gave me some more, and then I left him.

I was quite disgusted with the experience I had just had, short as it had been. For you see, Allen, I was meant for a fine lady, I'm certain ; for a wicked one perhaps, but still a fine one.

“I left London then, and Kitty, and Salekson, and went off very quietly to Bournemouth, where I was dreadfully ill. During my illness a clergyman's wife came to see me very often. She was one of those women that we always sneer at when we aren't ill, and then scream for when we are. She spent at least a quarter of her income on charity ; and instead of passing half her time in talking or inventing scandal, appeared never to see anything but the best side of things ; consequently, she was said to be stingy, officious, and to have her pockets full of tracts. She was a truly good woman though ; and if everybody was

like her, we shouldn't do badly. Without seeming to show any curiosity, she managed to get some of my secrets out of me. I believe I was delirious for a time, and may have disclosed a little then. But the way she learnt most was from my own lips, when I had recovered from my illness, and was quite rational.

“You know—I daresay you've noticed it in your time—most cunning people of the second-rate order, petty schemers like myself, are often very simple in a sort of a way, as well as cunning. In me this sort of spurious candour was really the remains of that innocence which I must have possessed once upon a time. It was the wreck, and it still is, of what I might have been. The tattered ensign, hoisted upside-down, on the mast of the sinking vessel.” [Mrs Vish here asked me whether she had not

used a very good simile? She said, too, that she believed she could write poetry, if she chose to attempt it.] “I was simple and cunning together then, to this lady who was such a good friend to me; and though I never admitted that my misfortunes came from my own fault, and nobody else’s, I let her know that I had suffered a great deal, and, amongst other things, told her how a rich man had thought of adopting me for his daughter, and how he hadn’t done so. I said that he used to alter his will every now and then, and that he had gout very badly. That was all my invention, and I daresay they didn’t believe it. But one day the clergyman’s wife led me on to talking about Italy, and what I had seen there, and I accidentally mentioned Mr M’Leod’s name.

“She didn’t express any emotion on hear-

ing it; but her husband, who happened to be present, immediately called out, 'Mr M'Leod!' and taking up 'The Times,' which lay on the table, ran out of the room.

"I don't think I took much notice of this at the time, but I remembered it the next day, when who should walk into the room where I was sitting alone, but Mr Vish! I can't describe the scene which followed. It would pain me to do so, and might only make you angry to hear it. He never said a word of reproach, but was all nobility and thankfulness.

"As for me, I cried as if I should break my heart. That looks as if I loved him; but I'm afraid I didn't. I respected him, certainly; but as to love, I always loved myself better than any one else, and that's what I was crying at. But, Allen, I swear

I meant to turn over a new leaf then. Vish kept on repeating that it was the finger of God which had brought us together again ; and I kept saying to myself that it was ; that this was the great chance given to me to amend—a better chance than the golden opportunity which I had lost with Mr M'Leod.

“Mr Vish, though he was a great scholar, was not shrewd in the ways of the world, as I daresay you’ve said to yourself already ; but of course he had to ask me what I had been doing ever since I left him. I told him my father and uncle had plundered me of all my money, and had tried to murder me ; that I had escaped from them, and been afraid to come to him. Oh ! I patched up some sort of a story, and accounted for the time, so as to make out that after leaving Edinburgh, I came

straight to Bournemouth. He listened to it all with the same indifference with which he had once before listened to Mr M'Leod's grounds of complaint against me. He listened with just the same indifference, only that he was no longer the fond champion, who wouldn't hear anything to my disadvantage, but the sober, fatherly sort of friend, who couldn't see, who thought it his duty rather than his pleasure not to see, whatever was said against me. Perhaps, if I had seized that moment to make a full confession, he would have still remained merciful; but it's no use thinking of what might have been.

“We were married at Bournemouth; and I returned with my husband to his home in the north, the place where you and I first met. Eh?”

We were here interrupted by the dwarf,

who came in to ask Mrs Vish to discharge a small bill, which a tradesman had just sent in.

Mrs Vish walked to a wooden work-box which stood on her window-sill, and taking out some money, gave it to the dwarf, telling him to pay the bill.

The money she counted out to him seemed, rather to my surprise, to be only a portion of a considerable sum which she kept in the work-box. The dwarf showed by his manner that he had also noticed the circumstance; for, as he was leaving the room, he made a most singular grimace, shook his head, and wrung his hands in the air. As soon as he had left us alone, Mrs Vish went on with her story; the continuation and conclusion of which, will be found in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XII.

“OUR honeymoon was not very romantic. You really can’t imagine how stupid it was. My poor husband didn’t find much pleasure in it; while as for me—well, the drudgery I had to suffer! We didn’t go away anywhere for a holiday, you see; but Mr Vish, after he had got me, went straight into harness again, as he called it. He was fully employed with his pupils; and set me as a matter of course to housekeeping, to an extent which I still believe to have been unreasonable. He made me keep accounts about everything. I had to weigh meat, and scold the butcher; to count the things for

the wash, and change the laundress ; to darn Mr Vish's socks, and sew on his shirt-buttons. And not only his, mind, but those of his three pupils. We only kept one servant, and I wonder how we managed to do the work between us. I'd sooner die than try it again. Don't suppose that Vish was all this time treating me like his darling little innocent Sally, and all that, because he wasn't. He didn't quarrel with me—I would much rather he had ; but as he made progress in his system of teaching, he began to develop what his teaching had taught him, a perfectly morbid love of method.

“ He did everything by fixed plan, or what he called ‘ formula,’—everything, no matter what it was. He had pigeon-holes in front of his writing-table, with labels meaning different things. If I spoke to him about

the house, or something, while he was doing a problem, he'd never answer me, but just scribble some hieroglyphic upon a piece of paper, and thrust it into a pigeon-hole — 'D,' for domestic, and so on. Once I came when he was busy, and told him something which I'm sure ought to have pleased him, but he only wrote down the day of the month, and put it away in 'D.'

"At night, when all the work was over, he was rather better, certainly. He used to come to me with a pipe in his mouth, and his hands full of scraps of paper, in a very good humour. 'Well, Sally,' he'd say, 'so you want to know what to say to the man about the gas-pipe;' or, 'Well, Sally, so our chimney's been smoking all day, up-stairs, has it?' reading over his old hieroglyphics, you know.

"Oh, it was such a dreadful dull life!

Yet I was a faithful wife to him for a good five years—five good years, mind. Then,—well, I was a faithful wife to him still, but I couldn't stand such a fearful existence for ever, and I began to want a little excitement. I had some spare time now, as we had become very prosperous, and kept three or four servants. The pupils were the people with whom I tried to have a little excitement to start with. I daresay you can imagine that when Vish first began teaching, his young men were rough kinds of animals, that only came to read. But as his reputation and his charges for tuition increased, he got some very smart fellows indeed; most of whom read as little as possible, instead of as much. Amongst these, then, in the hope of getting a little excitement, I cast about for a friend, and I wasn't long in finding one.

“I formed an attachment with a youth named Griffin. He was a well-principled boy; very fond of music, and poetry, and all that; and I really think that a ‘course’ of Griffins would have done me a great deal of good. But Griffin went away, and the next pupil I struck up an intimacy with was a young fellow of the name of Hoskin. He didn’t care about music, or poetry, or anything, but himself. He didn’t understand me a bit; or he did, you may say, whichever you please, for he began to make love to me directly. I confess I fell in with it somehow, but I’d much rather he’d been a little slower in making his attack. When Hoskin left our house for his home, he made me promise to see him in London at Christmas. With no end of labour, I persuaded my husband to take me to town for two days, when the season Hoskin had

fixed upon, came round. I wrote him a most tender letter, explaining all the difficulties I had surmounted, and telling him where he could find me. Imagine my vexation, when he answered from Scotland, coolly saying that he was having some good shooting, and couldn't well manage to come. 'Couldn't well manage!' But that's nothing to some things I've had to put up with.

"After Hoskin, came a very clever, nice, young fellow. (Of course, Allen, you weren't the first I made love to.) This Spenser I regularly besieged, and I'm afraid I made him unhappy, for after all he was nothing but a baby. After him——. Well, it doesn't matter who came next, does it? For a few years things went on the same. Mr Vish became more and more abstracted, and away from me. I became less and less

particular whether I pleased him or not. But you know I wasn't so very bad, all things considering. Why, if Vish had only been more of a husband to me, I'm sure I should have been a good wife to him. You know I owed him so much, didn't I?"

[“Don't sneer in that awful way, Allen,” Mrs Vish here stopped to say. “It doesn't make you good-looking, you know.”]

I told her ‘that I was thinking;’ as indeed I was.

She begged me ‘not to think with such an ugly face, then,’ and proceeded.]

“At last, who should come to Mr Vish as a pupil, but a man I'd known when he was a youngster in London, at the time when I'd gone off by myself, you know. I can't tell you much about this, because I've made a promise, and I must keep it. You know the man well enough, but I won't mention

his name. I pretended not to recognise him ; but that didn't last long, for the first time we were alone, he asked me, in a free-and-easy way, 'how I was getting on !'

"Oh that man ! Nobody knows him one bit ! Always trying to make himself out a fiend, when he's really just the opposite. Why, one Christmas, Mr Vish had to send away a lot of poor people who were next to starving, because he'd nothing to give them ; and this man we're speaking about said it was a very good thing ; that they ought to be all 'serfs,' and a lot of rubbish. But he went and gave every poor family in the village a blanket, and a sack of coals, and five shillings ! He did indeed.

"But I'm talking about his relations with me. Well, that was just the blanket and coals over again. He used to say that I ought to lead whatever life I chose, and do

just what I thought pleasantest ; and he used to let me act up to this to a certain point, when he always stepped in and put a stop to it all. That was exactly how he acted between you and me. You needn't feel sorry about it, for it was all Garbold and me. Oh, well, I've told you his name, but you knew it before. I never cared for you really, you know ; but I liked you, I thought you were a gentleman ; and you know there are very few gentlemen going about nowadays, whatever people may say. I took a fancy to you somehow, Allen. You were so solemn about phrenology ; and weren't rough like Hoskin and those fellows. Mr Garbold used to look on at our proceedings, and pretend to enjoy it all.

“He made a good deal of mischief, I must say, but I believe he trusted you, all the time, more than me. He used for ever to

be telling me what a nice boy you were ; and he let me know, too, that you were tremendously rich. I don't know whether that was true or not, but I believed it at the time, and took it into my head to run off with you. How should we have got on together, do you think ? Now, don't look so cross. Well, our little affair, yours and mine—I don't know if Garbold ever told you—was the cause of my great quarrel with Mr Vish, which ended in my separation from him.

“Some mischievous wretch—I often fancy it was that Pillett—went and told Vish that we two were going to elope, and that Garbold was trying to prevent it. What do you think Vish did ? He'd have cut his throat a few years ago ; but he was only an old book-worm now, and all the notice he took of it at first was to send for Gar-

bold, and ask him whether the charge against me was true. I believe Garbold just said something to quiet him—told him it was an exaggeration—and promised to set it all right himself.

“Mr Vish did not come to a personal explanation with me, until you and all the pupils had gone; but he had a long talk with Garbold before he went away, and Garbold came to me and advised me to tell my husband everything, for that I shouldn’t ever get such a good opportunity again. I suppose it was good advice, but somehow I spoilt everything.

“As soon as you’d all gone away, Vish came to me, looking on the ground and counting with his fingers, as he used to do, and said, ‘Well, Sally, tell us all about it.’

“I told him all about you. I said that

he had neglected me, and that I had been dull, and all that. Well, he didn't seem to think much of this; so then, remembering Mr Garbold's advice, I told him a great deal more, meaning to get the worst over. I told him all my former life, or most of it, and he still seemed to listen with indifference, till at last I came to the worst part you know; and then, goodness gracious! For some years, Vish had been in the habit of always looking on the ground, as he was doing then; but directly he heard me bring out that about Salekson, he looked me straight in the face, for a full minute. He then made a gesture as if he was going to hit me; but dived both hands into his pockets, instead, and exclaimed in a low, broken voice, 'What an abominable vixen! Sally, what a vixen!' Having said which, he rushed out of the house.

“He remained in the garden smoking one pipe after another for some hours; then came in, packed up a few clothes, and left our home for a market-town not far off.

“Presently he wrote to me, saying that the first great object was that we should separate at once; and the second, that there should be no public scandal. Soon afterwards, a lawyer came to see me, and it was arranged that I should leave Mr Vish for ever. As I daresay you know, I had no children, left then, though I had had three.

“Well, I left Mr Vish, and, like the moth and the candle, went straight off to London. It would be hypocrisy to pretend that I lived very respectably there, for I did not. The plain truth is, I found Mr Vish’s allowance, paid quarterly, wouldn’t enable me to live in the sort of way I was accustomed

to; and I didn't choose to alter my habits. At last, I found my way into the divorce court. Perhaps you don't pore over those reports in the papers, as prim old ladies do, so that you never heard of this before.

“Well, after my divorce, I can't tell you what I did. I got on very badly, and sank, first into being a ballet-girl, and then, of all the horrid vulgar things, the housemaid in a public-house. The landlady, my precious mistress, used me in the most brutal manner; and one day, to spite her, I tore up all her hideous fine clothes, and turned on all the taps in the place. I was then dragged before a magistrate; to whom I explained exactly who I was, thinking it would be sure to get me off. But he said that if what I had told him about myself was true,

it only made my conduct all the worse; and the stupid old thing gave me fourteen days' imprisonment.

"I went through it with less pain and misery than I had expected; and when they let me out again, I went to a society I'd heard about, and asked them to give me a fresh start in life. They said they would do their best, but required me to tell them 'who my father was.'

"As I thought no harm could come of revealing it, I told them who he was; when—would you believe it?—they hunted him up at once, and restored me to his paternal care.

"I made friends with him again, rather out of despair than from natural affection, and began to share his fortunes; though, as he was only a beggar, poor man, that wasn't much good to me. For some time,

however, we lived on together; I having to sing in the streets, and all sorts of things, to provide him and me with bread.

“After a most miserable year, we went into the workhouse, and he died there. I might have remained in the workhouse until now, for all I know, but a good friend heard of it. I wrote to him, that is, and he took me out, and set me up with the little shop down-stairs.”——

“That’s all my story. When you met me coming out of the police station, I’d been locked up for getting—making a noise with that girl you saw. But I don’t see much of her generally, as she’s not in good society. Ha! ha! Well, mine has been a queer history, hasn’t it? Suppose you tell me yours?”

She laughed as she said these words; but in another instant she sank her face

upon the table, and wept as if her heart would break.

I found it useless to attempt consoling her, for her distress only increased. So I summoned the woman from below to her assistance, and then sorrowfully departed.

CHAPTER XIII.

I now feel a strong temptation, to which most writers in my situation yield, to pronounce a panegyric upon what I have just written. This panegyric I should duly disguise as a criticism ; pointing out faults which did not exist, or which every one would excuse, and calling attention to merits which might otherwise escape any notice. I say I feel disposed to give way to this temptation, but I shall not yield to it.

On the contrary, I feel bound to state that the "History of Mrs Vish" seems to me to be very improbable. I consider it most improbable that a woman once hold-

ing the position which Mrs Vish, to my actual knowledge, did once hold, should descend so low as she professes to have descended, by the force only of those circumstances which she relates; and after this, I need hardly say that I cannot pledge myself to the truth of any part of her story; even of those parts, the truth of which may appear certain from internal evidence derived from other portions of this work. So I leave the subject of the past adventures of "Mother Knight," to be judged on its own merits, and for my own part, repudiate all responsibility in the matter.

Having left Crow Court, I returned to the chambers of which I had taken possession. The next morning I sallied out in order to find Sir George Walnut. My main duty was to thank him for the lib-

eral assistance he had given me ; but I thought it was also incumbent upon me to confess to him that I was no longer acting *in formâ pauperis*, but on the gambling principle recommended to me by the professor of common-sense.

I found the general at home, and after expressing my gratitude and thanks to him, proceeded to unfold the singular scheme by which I had determined to overcome the difficulty in the way of earning a livelihood. The general received my communication with a strange kind of inconsistency, which both surprised and gratified me.

ALLEN.—I saw Mr Ratcliff, general, as you told me to do.

THE GENERAL.—‘Sir Clive Ratcliff,’ we must call him now ; I see the Queen has knighted him.

ALLEN.—I'm very glad to hear it, I'm sure. Well, sir, I asked him to tell me 'a common-sense way of earning my bread and cheese.'

THE GENERAL.—And what did he say?

ALLEN.—He told me that I ought not to be so despondent.

THE GENERAL.—Of course you should not!

ALLEN.—He said I ought to hold up my head.

THE GENERAL.—Very good advice!

ALLEN.—And he told me not to waste time in thinking of employment, but to count on my uncle's coming back as a certainty.

THE GENERAL.—So it is a certainty.

ALLEN.—Then you approve of his advice, sir?

THE GENERAL.—Most certainly; most assuredly; I approve of it *in toto*!

I now rather expected the General to chuckle, and to say that the advice was the same which he himself would have proposed, but which he had refrained from proposing, on the ground that it would have been too worldly. But instead of this, he seemed slightly embarrassed, as if he had just received a rebuke. However, he did not show any of that mortification which some disagreeable philanthropists are apt to show when they find that the object of their succour has been somehow made happy by a means independent of their exertions ; and he wished me joy in a way which made me feel that my assumed, or temporary, prosperity was almost as comfortable a thing as prosperity itself.

This impression was confirmed by an unexpected occurrence which took place the day following, when, to my great surprise,

I received an invitation to the house of Lady B——, who was the acknowledged leader of one of the most brilliant circles in society. I at once accepted the invitation; and then proceeded to puzzle myself as to who the secret friend could be who had procured me the invitation. When the evening for the entertainment came, I repaired to Lady B——'s house, when almost the first person I saw was Sir Clive Ratcliff.

He seemed delighted to meet me, and confided to me, after I had congratulated him on his recent honours, that not being yet certain of the exact character of Lady B——'s entertainment, he had his star in his pocket, so as to assume it in case of need.

"That is a trade secret," thought I, "which he should have kept to himself."

As soon as my name was announced to

Lady B——, she ended all my doubts as to the means by which I had been invited to her house, by asking me “how dear Mrs Chobham was? and when she was likely to return from Jersey?”

I reproached myself with ingratitude as soon as I discovered that it was Helena who had befriended me; for I had hitherto been divided in my mind only as to whether Sir Clive Ratcliff, or some of my Longstaffe cousins, had been kind enough to think of me.

In the course of the evening I was suddenly slapped upon the shoulders by Stoneman, (a former brother officer), who exclaimed, in the very heartiest manner, “My dear old chappy, how are you?”

I spoke to him for a few moments, but only with ironical politeness, for he had cut me in the street, the day before, by some

accident. Such conduct only strengthened me in forming a very low opinion of my fellow-creatures—an opinion which no degree of after-prosperity would have served to entirely eradicate.

I left the brilliant assembly in company with Sir Clive Ratcliff, who, having discovered that the occasion demanded it, had been wearing his star, which he now returned to his pocket.

In the course of conversation, he informed me that he had purchased a house in London, and was going to commence his establishment by engaging a housekeeper. Upon this, a certain benevolent scheme occurred to me, which I afterwards attempted to carry out.

Besides greatly raising my spirits, my presence at Lady B——'s house brought me very happily back to the notice of the

Longstaffe family. They were living in a large house which they had taken for the season, and in it they were dispensing what they believed to be hospitality. As I have said before, they had taken hardly any notice of my father, or of me, since our misfortunes. I believe my aunt herself had made some very feeble attempt to open her doors to me (for she knew, all the time, that I was in London); but she must have been overruled by the arguments of her daughters, who had probably urged "that Tom was ruined, and all that; and that he was much more comfortable left alone; that they would ask him in a minute, only it wouldn't be a kindness." Now, however, having seen my name in the 'Post,' they sent me an affectionate, playful request, "to come and be scolded for not calling before."

As I read these words, I uttered a few

rather warm expressions which had better not be printed; yet, so far from repelling the hypocritical overture, I at once grasped it: for I knew that an exhibition of high spirit would not either distress or impress these relations of mine; whereas, in accepting from them anything that they chose to give, I was carrying out, and partly forestalling, the programme which Sir Clive had drawn up for me. So I went and dined with them, and behaved so well, that I really made them believe me incapable of even the most ordinary sort of malice.

My aunt during the evening spoke to me with extraordinary kindness: and though she said very little that was true, I must own that she had the voice and the eyes of an angel; and I am sure that whatever I thought of her, her interview with me raised her in her own estimation, and that

she felt a very good Christian as she dismissed her maid that night.

Soon after this, I dined with a host before whom deception was neither politic nor necessary—namely, Sir Clive Ratcliff. He, like the General, congratulated me on the change I had made in my habits, as if I had really just been left a large fortune. He said that he chiefly envied me my independence. “You,” he said, “can express any opinions you please; while I, until somebody chooses to make me a dictator, have to adapt myself to the mediocrists from whom I have to take my orders.”

I smiled at this speech, but ventured to ask “what a ‘mediocrist’ was?”

“A man of mediocre abilities,” answered Sir Clive. “I am looking for a mediocrist at the present time,” he continued, “to make him my private secretary.”

“Do you really mean, Sir Clive,” said I, very earnestly, “that you require your private secretary to be a man of inferior abilities?”

“I require him to be an ass, most certainly,” answered Sir Clive. I was on the point of interposing some remark; but Sir Clive proceeded—“I mean, he must be an official ass. A yellow-bearded, narrow-chested young man, of supernatural gravity, who will be insolent for me, and show me how to avoid being good-natured.”

“Well,” said I, “if you can dispense with some of those qualifications, there is really nothing I should prefer——”

“To being my private secretary yourself, do you mean?” he interrupted.

I told him that was certainly my meaning. But he said—

“No, no, my dear fellow; you’re a great

deal too good for that. Besides, remember your plan. What use would the uncle be if he came home and found you comfortably settled down as a mediocrist, with a mediocre salary? Perhaps he'd marry at once. However, if he comes home, and then does nothing for you; and if Mr Chobham permanently shakes off his paralysis; and if you then still think the same, and I am still in a position to talk about secretaries,—why, I promise that I'll take you, and that it will give me great pleasure to do so. I shall have to teach you a little Hindustani though, in that case, for I've been appointed to go out and inquire into an Indian 'social enigma,' which some half-witted penny-a-liner has routed up; and I shall have to collect a good deal of lying evidence in the native language."

He next asked me whether there was

any other way in which he could be of present service to me ; and he said that he should be only too happy to find he could be of use. An idea which had first occurred to me when I met him at Lady B——'s house, now came back to my mind, and I replied, " You could oblige me very much indeed, Sir Clive ; but whether you would consider it a small matter, or a great one, I don't know."

" What is it ? " he asked, smiling, but eyeing me with a very wary expression.

" Well," answered I, " you spoke the other night about wanting a housekeeper ; and I know of a woman, — a lady, but she has met with misfortunes—who, I am sure, would be only too glad of such a place. I wouldn't recommend her to every one ; but really, you seem to look for such unusual qualifications for employment under

you, that I think she might suit you to perfection."

"Who is she?" inquired Sir Clive.

"A Mrs Knight," I answered; and I proceeded to tell him as much as I considered necessary, about the former Mrs Vish.

When I had finished, Sir Clive said, "Mrs Knight, *alias* Mrs Vish. Very well; as you say that she'd suit me, I'll invest in a charitable action, and take her. Only, I must hold you responsible if she runs off with my forks and spoons."

I was surprised at his alacrity, and having thanked him, soon afterwards hastened to Crow Court to impart the good news to the person whom it most concerned.

CHAPTER XIV.

A CERTAIN kind of modesty has hitherto restrained me from referring to a subject of peculiar delicacy—namely, the condition of Mr Frank Chobham's health. But the difficulty will soon have to be faced ; and in this chapter I propose slightly, and very gradually, to approach that subject which ere long I shall be compelled to deal with in a much bolder manner.

I will first ask the reader to imagine my father and Helena in the cottage at Pontac, in Jersey. She was working at embroidery, and he was sitting with an open volume on his knees, feigning senility, when this dia-

logue (since repeated to me) took place between them.

FATHER.—It's a pity Tom doesn't try to get a secretaryship any longer. Secretary to a London Club ! Fine position !

HELENA.—Perhaps something better may be found for him.

FATHER (crowing, in an affected manner).—No, no, no, no ! Not any finer position than secretary. Independent position ; your own master.

HELENA.—I wonder whether Lord and Lady B—— ever took any notice of him. I asked them to get him an appointment.

FATHER.—Go anywhere—anywhere !

HELENA.—General Walnut seems to have been very kind to him, doesn't he ? Tom's old General, you know—Sir George Walnut.

FATHER.—He was a military man, was he not ?

HELENA.—Yes. I say he has been very kind to your son.

FATHER.—You can never tell—never tell.

HELENA.—What sort of a housekeeper do you think I make? Do I make you comfortable? Do I look after everything properly?

FATHER.—Oh, I'm very comfortable. Not well off, though. But tell me, how soon are you going to run away from me?

HELENA.—I'll stay with you as long as I can be of any use—as long as you want me, unless——

FATHER.—Have you heard from your mother-in-law lately—from Mrs Chobham?

HELENA.—Yes; I heard from her this week.

FATHER.—She's living in Kent, is she not?

HELENA (coldly).—She is at Homburg.

FATHER (with amazement).—At Hom-
burg !

(Helena now eyed him as if she would warn and reprove his secret thoughts. But he underwent the scrutiny without showing the least embarrassment.)

FATHER (repeating). — At Homburg !
What is she doing there ?

HELENA (sorrowfully looking him in the face).—Mr Chobham is ill at Homburg.

FATHER (in a piping tone).—Is he any better ?

HELENA (coldly).—He is not better ; he has had another stroke. Are you ready to come out for your walk ?

FATHER.—No ; not now.

HELENA.—The sun won't be out much longer.

FATHER (laughing).—Whose son ? Are you going out ?

HELENA.—I'm going with you ; yes.

FATHER.—We'll go together.

It will be seen from the above that my father did not scruple to wound Helena's feelings in order to satisfy his own reprehensible curiosity. He did this often—sometimes pursuing his inquiries to the length of asking Helena whether she expected her husband to recover, or whether she should live with old Mrs Chobham in the event of his death. Whenever he found that in his capacity of a rational man he had been rather brutal, he at once took refuge in senility, which he had now taught himself to assume in so skilful a manner, that it was very difficult not to be deceived. Nevertheless, he never quite imposed upon Helena ; and though, for a reason which modesty forbids me to state, she kept up a friendly appearance towards him,

and did not cease to make his life happier by her presence, his whimsical conduct all the time caused her pain, and very often resentment. She bore the main affliction of her life with great resignation and fortitude, as I have plainly enough indicated; and she needed resignation and fortitude to grapple with the cruel but far from thoughtless suggestions which my father chose to throw out to her. Most women in her circumstances would not have resisted the temptation to play the martyr—thus obtaining the outward sympathy, and the inward grinning censure, of the world. But she, whenever she felt inclined to repine at her fate, never went further than to use an argument which contained more reproof than self-commiseration, namely—
“Why did I marry him?”

As to the possibility or probability of his

dying, she always endeavoured to separate that from any thoughts of release ; for she considered such an association of ideas to be exceedingly wicked, and not fit to be entertained even in her inmost heart.

Soon after the dialogue lately recorded, I received from my father a letter which had a most disquieting effect upon my mind ; brought into my head thoughts which I was always striving to exclude ; and made me feel indignant that it should be possible for misfortune to change a character of simplicity and benevolence into one of cunning and selfishness. My father touched on various matters which I had lately mentioned in a letter to him : my renewed intimacy with the Longstaffes ; my friendship with Sir Clive ; the misfortunes of Mrs Vish, and my scheme for assisting her. He expressly urged me to feign respect and

deference towards all who could be of any service to me. "And do not waste time," he said, "in trying to help other people. You will get no thanks for it—they will only laugh at you, and you need for yourself all that you would bestow upon them. I am an exception to the rule, I confess. I am truly grateful, my dear son, for your extraordinary generosity to me; and that, I confess, is all I can see there is to be thankful for. When your uncle returns—if he has not had his throat cut in the desert, which is most probable,—do not be surprised if he gives you the cold shoulder. For my part, though we used to love each other dearly at one time, I shall not be astonished if he offers to make me his gardener, and you his coachman. In fact, I am astonished at nothing in this world, except at virtue; and that I see

so seldom, and in such very unexpected places, that it certainly does astonish me: Helena Chobham here, my nurse, astonishes me; for I really cannot see what motive she has in being so kind to me. However, 'Love me, love my dog.' She loves you, I am convinced. That is, she thinks you would suit her—and she is quite right; at least, we know she would suit you. And now prepare to hear something of the greatest importance. Chobham has had *another paralytic stroke*; but God forbid I should say anything I ought not to say about it. You will apprehend my meaning. There's your opening for the future,—a better one than serving out pickles, with a pen behind your ear. (Forgive me for making this allusion.)"

I have said that this letter made a disagreeable impression upon me. But it also

caused me a good deal of surprise ; for though I knew my father chose to assume the ways of a dotard, this was the first time that he had entirely thrown off the mask. However, although astonished at the contrast thus exhibited, I should have been still more amazed had his letter been interspersed with any crowings, or broken ejaculations, set down in writing.

I must now leave my father in the somewhat unhappy light in which he has last appeared. But I trust that when I next return to him, some hopes of his reformation will have begun to appear.

CHAPTER XV.

I CAN say, with great sincerity, that nothing gives me more pleasure than making miserable people happy. I do not take any great credit to myself on this account; for I am inclined to agree with Mr MacLaurel, who says, "There is nae sic thing as desenterestedness in the warld."¹ The reason why I make the complacent remark with which this chapter opens is, that I do not wish to pass over my kindness to poor Mrs Vish altogether. The writer of an autobiography is very apt to hint that his vices are only

¹ Headlong Hall.

such as became a man, and his virtues such as became an angel ; and though I have endeavoured to avoid these snares, I must do myself justice.

As soon as I had left Sir Clive Ratcliff, although it was nearly eleven o'clock at night, I went off to Mrs Vish ; and having found her in her room, hastily communicated to her what I considered her great good fortune. To my great annoyance I found that she was under the influence of liquor ; and I discovered the fact, not so much by her personal appearance, or even by her mode of utterance, as by her manner of receiving my offer. She stupidly feigned to entirely misunderstand the proposed relations between herself and Sir Clive ; and she exerted herself in displaying a great deal of coarse wit on the subject. Disheartened by her ingratitude, and dis-

gusted by her drunkenness and impudence, I was about to leave her, when she let fall some words which attracted my attention.

“What did you go and pop your father’s spoons for?” said she.

“What do you mean, Mrs Vish?” I answered, with a sneer.

“Oh, you’re a fool,” said she; and she began singing, “Who went to his uncle’s? Who took his father’s spoons to his uncle’s? Who says he’s met with misfortunes?” Then, abruptly ending her song, she exclaimed, “Don’t stare at me like a simpleton all night. What are we going to drink?”

I escaped from her soon after this; but before leaving the house, begged the dwarf’s wife to go and put her to bed.

During my walk home, I reflected as to my propriety of conduct in having, out of simple good-nature, recommended such a

person as Mrs Vish for a post of trust; but strange to confess, I resolved that so far as I was concerned, her recent misbehaviour should not injure her prospects, but that she should have a fresh start, and a fair trial from Sir Clive Ratcliff, if she pleased. The truth was, that Sir Clive, notwithstanding all his kindness, did to a slight degree irritate me by his perpetual self-confidence, which I thought sometimes amounted to self-sufficiency; and I had decided that if his housekeeper proved a bad bargain, it would only be a fair punishment for him, and a lesson to him as to the fallibility of his judgment. Any suspicion that Sir Clive was acting as he did, from his own extraordinary good-nature, and desire to please me, whose sound judgment he thought very questionable,—never entered my head.

The next morning after my visit to Mrs Vish—it will be convenient to continue calling her by her former husband's name—I received a note from her, in which she implored forgiveness for her disgusting conduct of the night before. “I can never look you in the face again,” she said. The note contained a remarkable postscript: “You are not angry about the spoons and candlesticks? I saw them at——” (She gave the number of a certain street in her neighbourhood.) I resolved to go and see her immediately, not so much to assure her of my unabated esteem for her character, as to try and solve the mystery of her postscript, and of some inebrious utterances she had made the night before.

On reaching the narrow passage which led into Crow Court, I found it crowded with people. I made my way through

them, and gathered from the conversation which was going on, that a woman had been killed. This, thought I, may be poor Mrs Vish, who in a fit of *delirium tremens* has committed suicide. The fancy that it was she, approached conviction when I perceived that the scene of the tragedy was the identical little house which she inhabited. I found a policeman posted at the door; but the dwarf, who was behind him, recognised me, and told the constable to admit me; whereupon the mob with eager courtesy made room for me to pass.

This mob was one which a particular kind of enthusiast would have called “a good-humoured crowd,”—that is, the rascals of whom it was composed appeared to be “good-humoured,” in the same manner that a dog who deserves to be beaten wags his tail; though I am quite sure that if

they could have been insured against any disagreeable consequences, their good-humour was ready to take the form of tearing people to pieces, or burning down houses, or committing any other atrocity.

As soon as I had been admitted into the house, the dwarf, wringing his hands over his head, spoke with great volubility as follows: "Cut the 'ole side of 'er 'ead open! Mrs Knight; yes, party came to see her, and 'ad some words with 'er. Cut open the 'ole side of 'er 'ead! Terrible lot o' blood! never see such a lot of blood before. The 'ole side of 'er 'ead, from the top of the 'ead down to the jaw like!"

"But who—who did all this?" I inquired.

The dwarf answered, "Don't know from Adam. She found 'im an awkward customer, though. The 'ole side of her 'ead——"

“Don’t go on about that, George,” interposed his wife—adding, “you’ll be able to see her presently, sir. The magistrate’s coming to take her last words.”

As we were waiting for the arrival of the magistrate, an inspector of police entered the room, and informed the dwarf and his wife that they were prisoners—upon hearing which, the dwarf gave an exclamation like the mingled shriek of a woman and the groan of a man, and rushed towards the door in order to escape ; but in vain, for he was instantly secured.

The people in the crowd, on hearing what had taken place, loudly groaned at the dwarf ; and then, breaking a pane of glass from the shop-window, sternly proceeded—in a good-humoured way—to steal all they could lay hands upon.

I was now witness of a most distressing

ceremony. Mrs Vish's injuries were of such a serious character, that it had been thought necessary to record her deposition; with which end, a neighbouring magistrate, accompanied by his clerk, had come to the spot.

Though I had not said a word as to my business, or in explanation of my presence, I found myself treated as a person who somehow had a concern in these affairs. Perhaps I was believed to be the doctor, or a relation of the dwarf; or perhaps I was set down for what indeed I was — namely, a distressed friend of the injured woman. However that may have been, my presence was taken as a matter of course, and I was allowed to accompany the others to the bedside of Mrs Vish.

I need not minutely describe her appearance. Suffice it to say, she lay in bed, her

face almost concealed by bandages, and her hands occasionally beating the counterpane in an impatient desperate manner which excited my compassion. The magistrate having opened his business, nodded to his clerk; whereupon the latter produced a pocket-book, and knelt upon one knee, close behind the poor woman's pillow.

After much whispering, muttering, and interpreting, on the part of the magistrate, Mrs Vish, the clerk, and a surgeon, one of the constables in attendance was ordered to bring in the dwarf and his wife; for they, I should have stated, had hitherto been kept below. Every one in the room, including the prisoners, was now mustered at the foot of the injured woman's bed, and she was exhorted to point out from the group, her assailant. She turned her head towards us, and regarded each one with a

sorrowful look of inquiry. The dwarf concealed a pair of handcuffs with which he had just been fitted, so that these indications of his guilt did not appear.

When Mrs Vish had completed her scrutiny of us, a shudder passed over her frame, and in a broken voice which went to my heart, she said, "He hit me from behind, with the shutter-bar; that's the one"—at the same time, amidst general amazement, she pointed out the magistrate's clerk from the group!

That individual, with becoming dignity, observed "that the poor creature was out of her senses."

But the dwarf cried out, "No, she ain't."

The magistrate then approached Mrs Vish once more, and said to her, "That is my clerk; you don't mean him, I suppose?"

But Mrs Vish only said, "Where's Gar-

bold?" which made the magistrate ask, "Who is Garbold?" a question which I answered for him.

The surgeon now said that he thought it useless to interrogate the woman any further, for that she was not in a condition to make a deposition which would be of any service.

A statement which the dwarf contradicted, by screaming, "Yes, she is; yes, she is."

Excepting the surgeon, we all then left her. I soon took an opportunity of telling the magistrate that I knew of something which it might be of importance for him to hear—namely, that Mrs Vish had been in the habit of keeping money in a certain work-box in her sitting-room. He answered, with civility, that this circumstance was already known to him, the dwarf's wife

having handed a considerable sum to the inspector, and made a voluntary confession, which had caused her and her husband to be arrested. The inspector confirmed what the magistrate had said, and remarked with a smile, that the dwarf would certainly be hanged, if the dwarf's wife could bring it about. Having told these officials where I was to be found in case of need, I quitted the tragical scene ; but presently returned with the best surgical aid, to the further assistance of the unhappy woman.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE adventures of Mrs Vish have already filled such a large portion of this work as is only justified by the undeniable fondness generally entertained for reading that kind of matter. For my own part, I declare that I should have preferred writing the same number of pages about the misfortunes and trials of a person totally different from Mrs Vish ; but the consideration that they would not have been read, or that if read, they would not have been appreciated at their proper worth, restrained me. However, I mean to say no more of Mrs Vish than is really necessary. Her injuries did not

prove mortal; but, as the severe moralist will doubtless rejoice to hear, the iron bar of the dwarf had for ever deprived her of the blessings of reason. Mr Garbold, on learning what had befallen Mrs Vish, came forward, and made a handsome provision for her further maintenance. He used also to pass many hours in trying to revive the faculties which had deserted her; and he declared, with a tear running down each cheek, that nothing amused him better than to converse with an idiot now and then.

Finally—as regards Mrs Vish—I have to relate the singular consequence of what she had hinted as to our “spoons and candlesticks.” The address she had given me was that of a large pawnbroker in the Borough. Having obtained proper assistance, I went to him, and soon recognised one or two articles which really belonged

to my father, but had violently passed out of his hands many years before.

The pawnbroker directed me to "a gentleman residing in Kentish Town." Him I found, and with the assistance of the person who accompanied me, persuaded to direct me to another gentleman, residing in Lambeth ; and, to make a long story short, I finally reclaimed two silver salvers, one epergne, one silver soup-tureen, several portions of a silver dinner-service, two wine-coolers, one teapot, one coffee-pot, and one milk-jug, one old punch-bowl, one race trophy, and three goblets ; all of which formed a valuable part of the booty taken from Hare Place by the deceased White. His dying statement was corroborated by other facts which came to our knowledge ; and we found that in the original disposal of the plate, he had received the assistance of the

reputed witch who lived close by ; the woman, that is, who had so reasonably predicted misfortune to our house.

It has been my experience, that pieces of good fortune fall together quite as often as misfortunes ; and at this period of my career, I met with several pieces of good fortune, at one and the same time. My uncle—I hope the reader will be pleased to hear of him—having by some extraordinary chance received a copy of the triplicate letter I had written him, soon afterwards wrote from Aleppo, that he was coming home with all speed. The intelligence was communicated to me by my father, who wrote to say, that I should do well to leave the chambers in which he understood I was living ; “for that ‘the proprietor’ would shortly be coming to them, and might be displeased.”

The letter was written throughout in this

bantering style, which I accepted as part of that general eccentricity which with my father had taken the place of grief and despair. The effect which the good news had upon me was rather curious. I naturally felt a great deal of relief; but I believe that, owing either to the precepts of Sir Clive Ratcliff, or to the sanguineness of my own disposition, I treated the whole thing just in the same manner that the reader probably treats it—that is, as an almost foregone conclusion.

However, I no sooner heard the news than I started for Jersey, with the ostensible purpose of congratulating my father, and being at his side, but with the secret object of being in time to waylay Helena; for I was afraid she would now plead that her attendance was no more required. But my calculations were completely upset; for

a circumstance, which had no connection with my uncle's movements, had suddenly called Mrs Frank Chobham away, the day before I left London in order to find her.

When I reached the cottage at Pontac, I found that she had already departed for Homburg, having been summoned to that place by the intelligence that her husband was in a most critical condition. This was a matter which, when my father communicated it to me, I wished not to discuss at all ; but he persisted in talking it over several times, with remorseless deliberation.

As to the other great news, which ought to have made him charitable to all the world, he resumed his sarcastic speculations as to the treatment we should experience from his brother. He declared that he himself was too old for the post of gardener, and that he should petition

my uncle to give him some lighter occupation. Nevertheless, his excitement nearly threw him into a fever. He used to rise in the middle of the night and walk up and down the large room of the cottage, repeating imaginary dialogues. At length, want of sleep and nervous agitation brought him to such a weak state, that he was obliged to take to his bed; and there, one morning, I having been unable to leave his side, the long-expected, long-deferred meeting took place.

My uncle was deeply moved, and at first all that he could say was, "William!" while my father became very pale, and was unable to speak a word.

But, as many other writers would do under similar circumstances, "I will draw a veil over the tender scene which followed."

As soon as my father had sufficiently recovered his strength, we all proceeded to London, where my uncle had engaged the rest of the house in which his chambers were, and had made everything as comfortable as any ordinary person could have desired. We passed away our time in a very pleasant manner ; visiting all the amusements which attracted us, and forming delightful plans, munificently suggested by my uncle, for the future ; and I would at this point, with a short glimpse of still further happiness which followed, bring my history to a close, were it not that some matters of importance still remain unadjusted. With one of these it is my duty to deal in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN the present day, when every creature gifted with common reason is more or less of a critic, there are certain faults which a novel-writer can no longer commit with impunity. And this observation is freely presented to critics of every degree to feast over, and use in any manner they may please. But there is one offence, and that a very daring one, to which a most incomprehensible leniency is still accorded, and seems likely to be accorded for ever: that is, the persistent disregard to probability—and even to decency—which authors display in hurrying out of the

world any character whom they have introduced, but whose continued presence they find to be embarrassing to the happy conclusion of their stories. The number of healthy squires who have been seized with apoplexy; of wicked merchants who have been accidentally (and yet most designedly) killed; of rich uncles who have rung the bell in the library, and have then been found on the carpet beyond the reach of medical aid; the number of ideal butcheries which have been thus perpetrated, would fill a large and horrible catalogue. The writer of a novel, of the ordinary kind,—that is to say, of one which deals only with extraordinary matters,—may be allowed a few murders of the kind to which I am referring; for when the persons who have been described are clearly seen to be wholly impossible persons, who

could never have lived at all, there is no objection to their being killed at any time and place, and in any manner that may appear most convenient. But in a work professing to be an autobiography, any man, woman, or child who is once described—not only “lovingly painted,”—should be allowed to exist for a reasonable length of time; and the writer should be held answerable that they are not treated with extravagant violence.

Bearing these remarks in mind, and still adhering to them, it is now my melancholy and solemn task, accepting all the responsibility which I know that I incur, to state plainly that Mr Frank Chobham is no more. His death took place at Homburg, and resulted from a paralytic stroke. His wife was with him in his last moments; and before leaving this world, he told her

that he heartily forgave her for all her unkindness to him. And now, though I have related nothing more than the truth, I feel as if my pen were stained with blood; and I must endeavour to shake off the feeling by passing on to other matters.

I showed in the last chapter that at this stage of my career a very satisfactory improvement in my fortunes took place, my uncle acted more generously than many persons may be willing to believe. The truth is, he only did what any brother ought to have done; but I am afraid that it is necessary for me to hint at some more usual explanation for his generosity; for, though any exhibition of meanness or other wickedness is likely to be received as a matter of course, a display of apparently disinterested virtue is generally thought to require special solution. Therefore, though

the true explanation of my uncle's behaviour lies in the fact that he had a good heart, and considered the ties of brotherhood to be sacred, I may also point out that my father had twice paid his debts for him in former times : that he had also helped him in purchasing some of his promotion ; and that he had all his life befriended him by every means in his power.

The first decided step which my uncle took, after providing for our temporary comfort, was to make me reasonably independent. He one day handed me a deed of gift, by which I became possessed of £1000 a-year. As to my father, my uncle had begged him to "club fortunes and live with him ;" a proposal which the elder brother very gratefully accepted.

Our benefactor's next step was to open negotiations with the persons into whose

hands Hare Place had passed, with a view to regaining possession of the home of our ancestors. At first we were alarmed and disgusted by hearing that the new proprietors had a scheme for converting the estate into "a number of beautiful villa residences;" but fortunately this plan was never attempted, and perhaps it was hinted only in order that the supposed projectors might have a better excuse for asking an exorbitant price for the property. My uncle, however, showed considerable skill in concealing his anxiety to be a purchaser, and the sum which had been demanded for Hare Place was at length reduced to reasonable limits. Still one great objection remained, which was, that the occupant, Alderman Taylor, held a seven years' lease, and did not appear anxious to resign possession.

Our prevailing good fortune befriended us again in this emergency ; for the alderman one day wrote to say “that he could not bear to see a gentleman of Mr Allen’s position kept out of his family seat, which he (the alderman) was ready to place at his service.”

My uncle at once seized on this offer, and after some further negotiations, Hare Place was once more our own, and we returned amidst much rejoicing. We were exceedingly happy, and our gratitude to Alderman Taylor was very sincere. I believe, too, that the alderman himself was, after all, not put to any great inconvenience. At least I happened to see in a certain newspaper soon afterwards, the text of a letter written by him, in which he said, “that he could no longer conceal from himself the conviction, that the representative of

one of our larger constituencies should pass a more considerable portion of his time amongst those in whom he felt the warmest interest, and for whom he had always cherished the highest personal esteem." Although this is a digression, I am happy to add that at the general election which followed, the alderman was again returned to Parliament by those grateful electors to whom he was so strongly attached.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHEN I said in the last chapter that our restoration to Hare Place was the occasion of great rejoicing, I alluded to the demonstrations of joy which were made by the tenantry, tradesmen, and most of the simpler people. They received my father with a triumphal arch, and in the evening roasted a whole ox on the village green, and there devoured it in his honour. They also burnt an effigy of Mr Mahuish, for they had decided that he was the real author of my father's misfortunes. These manifestations, which at first appeared to be exhibitions of mere rustic loyalty, presently proved, to our

great surprise and satisfaction, to be the result of an agitation which was being spread throughout the whole country. The immediate cause of this agitation was the failing health of Mr Saunders, who was in prison ; and the public in expressing its dislike for seeing bodily suffering inflicted, loudly sounded the cry that there had been a miscarriage of justice ; and, though Mr Saunders was more especially pointed out as the victim, my father had the honour of being frequently mentioned as another object for any spare allowance of compassion.

My uncle, perceiving that our best plan was to take advantage of this wave of excitement before it should have rolled away, entered into the agitation with great vigour. He attended three or four public meetings which had been summoned, and delivered

speeches, in which he found means to prevent the indignation being monopolised for the fate of Mr Saunders, and he took care that on each occasion a resolution should be passed expressing confidence in my father's integrity, and condolence with him and his family, "for the unmerited indignity to which he had, by the faulty operation of the law, been recently subjected."

My uncle furthermore endeavoured to persuade my father into prosecuting a few publishers for libel; but my father said, that he had had enough experience of the law to know that it was a very dangerous engine, which, if put into motion by unskilful persons, was liable to do them greater harm than that which they had intended to inflict on others. So the search for law remedies was not attempted.

We were assisted, however, from a most unexpected quarter. An influential newspaper brought out a succession of letters signed, "A former shareholder in the Wolvenden Joint-Stock Bank," "*Fiat Justitia*," "A Country Parson," "A Barrister," and, most imposing of all, "One of the Jury." Most of these letters took the course of arguing upon my father's case, and altogether excluding that of Mr Saunders ; and a person might have really supposed that the taint of the dock had done my father some cruel bodily harm, from which he would never recover. When this correspondence was ended, a mighty leading article appeared, stating, "that the facts recently brought to light showed the imperative need for the appointment of a Public Prosecutor."

All this was very gratifying ; but I was astonished to find that the person who had

caused the newspaper to take up the matter in the way that had been done, was no other than the self-styled laundryman, Mr Drinkwater-Hyslop-Drinkwater. Sir George Walnut told me the fact in confidence ; and thus, incredible though it may appear, Drinkwater thought it no disgrace to take in washing, but was nevertheless ashamed of having any connection with literature. But whatever the man's character may have been, he was of great use to our cause, and owing to his exertions, and to those other causes before mentioned, people began to say that my father had been very badly treated ; that he should never have been committed for trial ; that no man was safe ; that he ought to be compensated for his losses. In fact, just as the world had formerly taken the fit of supposing that the degree of stupidity my father claimed to have pos-

sessed was impossible, so it now took the fit of supposing that any degree of stupidity was possible, and that the most extraordinary stupidity to be found was the most laudable, being nearly the same thing as the most extraordinary virtue. Therefore relations, friends, and acquaintances, thronged the portals of Hare Place, and exhibited such unmeasurable impudence in the way in which they pretended to have been always upon the best terms with us, that I positively forgave them.

At this time, though I had not reached the summit of my earthly happiness, I was still leading a very pleasant existence. My uncle had caused the house to be filled with agreeable visitors, the stables to be filled with horses, and the cellars to be filled with wine. In assisting him in his labour in the latter respect, I was much amused by re-

ceiving a visit from my former tyrant, Mr Marter, who, having become a wine merchant, now requested our patronage. As he had used me rather badly in former times, I resolved to heap coals of fire on his head : and certainly, if I had drunk all the wine which I proceeded to buy from him, I should have been nobly avenged for all the wrongs he had ever done me. For, like many wine merchants who are just commencing business, Mr Marter's stock largely consisted of Tokay, sparkling claret, white port, and suchlike dangerous curiosities.

Amongst the guests at our house was Sir Clive Ratcliff, who was now my most confidential friend. He was about to sail for India, and already he had in his train "a narrow-chested, yellow-bearded young man, of supernatural gravity," such as he had

stated his intention of procuring. Directly I saw this person, I anticipated some amusement out of him, and I was not altogether disappointed. His conceit was not to be penetrated. He was only eight-and-twenty, and quite undistinguished, yet his opinions amounted to this—viz., that the whole world, excepting himself, was in the wrong upon every subject. He was fond of no special occupations, except climbing Swiss mountains, and reading German books. Sir Clive was highly pleased with him, and listened to the solemn nonsense which he talked, with an appearance of sincere interest, from which he used to relieve himself by coming to my room, burying himself in a chair, and laughing immoderately. But I could never tempt him into any more candid expression of opinion as to his secretary, for he

declined to speak about him further than to extol his worth, which he often did.

On a subject of much greater importance, Sir Clive was as communicative as I could desire. He knew the history of my attachment to Mrs Frank Chobham, and, just before he left England, he gave me some admirable advice, which I had confidentially sought from him. The advice was simply this—that I should control my impatience for at least a year, and in the meantime, if I could contrive it, renew my intimacy with Helena, upon a footing which should inspire her with confidence. “If she seems inclined, poor thing, to go back to nursing, or something of that sort,” said Sir Clive, “do your best to prevent it; and when the proper time comes, go to her and set the whole thing before her in a common-sense light.”

Perhaps these and other utterances on the part of Sir Clive may not inspire all the respect I should wish them to receive ; but the reader should ponder over the private utterances of the great men of his own acquaintance, and decide whether they were distinguished by equal or more extraordinary merit.

✱

CHAPTER XIX.

I WILL now give a slight outline of the further fortunes of some of those whom I have introduced in the course of this work ; and I shall also try to describe the conclusion which I have chosen for my own personal adventures.

Sir Clive Ratcliff took his departure for India, where he afterwards performed the duties intrusted to him with such remarkable sagacity and prudence, that people now speak of him as a man who is destined for the highest possible distinction.

Sir George Walnut also returned to India, but without giving rise to any prog-

nostications of extraordinary success in store for him. He, however, had the good fortune to arrive just in time for a frontier war of some importance, in which, by virtue chiefly of his seniority, he took a most prominent part. The public, between a mouthful of muffin and a dram of coffee, solemnly criticised his strategy, and was pleased to approve of it. The consequence was, that he was rewarded out of all proportion for those achievements which were known to the world at large, but not out of proportion for those gallant acts of the past, which had been principally noticed only by himself, and a few military friends.

Mr Garbold, after the curious matrimonial experience which I chronicled, for some time remained idle. Then he became fired with enthusiasm for the "duties of property," and was returned to Parliament by

the suffrages of a number of Welsh "serfs," who were in his employment. He distinguishes himself in the House of Commons, by never opening his lips to speak upon any subject which he does not understand; and, merely on this account, some shrewd observers have said that he may be regarded as "the coming man."

My father and uncle still "club their fortunes" at Hare Place; but they talk of resigning possession, and going to live together in London, in order to suit the supposed convenience of a humble individual in whom they are interested.

That individual, having for a whole year abstained from disturbing the quiet of a widowed lady to whom he was most devotedly attached, at last ventured to implore from her that felicity which he was most seriously determined to have. His first

application was unsuccessful. But he persevered, his fond hopes were at length realised, and not only has his beloved wife conferred on him an amount of happiness which is entirely beyond his merit, but she has herself attained a degree of contentment little short of that which her noble conduct has deserved.

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